

# Pulpectomy



Clarence Street  
DENTAL Group

A pulpectomy is the process of removing all of the nerves within the tooth and cleaning out the infection. This can be done on either a baby tooth or as the beginning stages of treatment on a permanent tooth.

## What is a pulpectomy?

A pulpectomy is typically the first step in a root canal procedure as a result of a large cavity or traumatic injury to a tooth. The pulp of the tooth is the soft inner material that contains connective tissue, blood vessels, and nerves. This procedure removes all the pulp from the crown and roots of a tooth.

Pulpectomies are usually performed in children to save a baby (primary) tooth that is severely damaged by decay or trauma, and is sometimes called a "baby root canal". While baby teeth may not seem important enough for a dental procedure like this, there are valid reasons for a pulpectomy. Losing that tooth too early can cause problems like:

1. Difficulty chewing
2. Speech development issues
3. Losing the space the baby tooth is reserving for the permanent tooth
4. Adjoining teeth move into the space, affecting the alignment of permanent teeth. This can lead to crooked, overcrowded teeth that are difficult to clean.

In permanent teeth, a pulpectomy can also be performed as the first part of the root canal procedure. Pulpectomies can be performed in one visit with these basic steps:

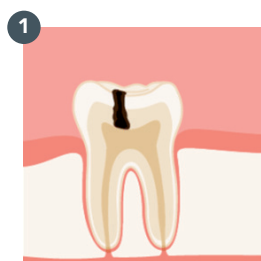
1. X-rays are taken to look for signs of infection in surrounding areas and to get a look at the shape of the root canals.
2. Local anaesthetic is used to numb the area.
3. A hole is drilled into the tooth.
4. Small dental instruments are used to remove all the pulp.
5. The tooth is cleaned, disinfected, and prepared for filling.
6. The tooth is filled with resorbable material. This material is designed to be reabsorbed by the body when the permanent tooth begins to erupt.

Root canals usually require more than one visit to the dental office. Once the pulp is removed, the entire root canal system is cleaned, shaped, filled, and sealed. You'll likely be sent home with a temporary filling, and then asked to return for permanent filling and/or a permanent crown.

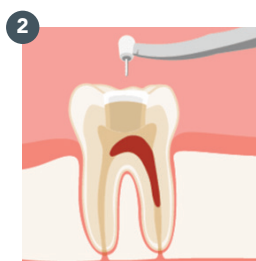
## What is the difference between a pulpotomy, a pulpectomy, and a root canal?

While all procedures address decay, infection, or trauma that has reached the pulp of the tooth, the procedures are not the same.

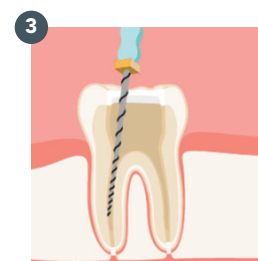
During a **pulpotomy**, the dentist removes the pulp from a tooth. This is the pulp that sits within the main part of a tooth, above the gumline. Pulpotomies are completed on teeth that are still alive, meaning that they respond to temperature and have sensation and blood flow. For the procedure to be successful, it's important that there isn't an abscess in the area, no spontaneous pain, and no bone loss under the tooth. Often, pulpotomies are done in baby teeth with pulp damage, but they can also be conducted on permanent teeth with trauma or cavities that reach the pulp.



1 Identify and open the cavity



2 Remove infected pulp



3 In case of a root canal, clean root canals



4 Filling of material that will be reabsorbed into the body before permanent tooth grows. In the case of a root canal on permanent tooth, apply temporary dressing



5 Apply cement



6 In the case of a root canal on permanent tooth, place crown

A pulpectomy, in comparison, is a procedure that removes the pulp from all parts of a tooth, including pulp in the roots. This procedure is done on teeth that are no longer alive. Pulpectomies can treat primary teeth with dead pulp or permanent teeth with infected pulp or an abscess. This procedure involves removing all the contents of the tooth's inner chamber, and the goal is to clean the entire root canal to protect it from further infection.

A **root canal** takes it one step further by filling the emptied and sterilized canals with a sealing material. The goal is to relieve your pain and restore your tooth to its natural function.

## What is the alternative?

If the tooth is too severely damaged or if the roots themselves are damaged, a pulpectomy may not be an option. This can be the case when the tooth has cracked, especially below the gum line, or if the tooth is already loose. The alternative option for treatment is to have the tooth removed. On a baby tooth, the dentist may recommend having a space maintainer put in until the permanent tooth is ready to come through.

## What to expect after?

This is a very safe procedure that has few risks associated with it. The benefit of having this treatment done is that you are prolonging the life of your tooth. It is usually preferred to keep your natural teeth as long as possible. Once you have had the pulpectomy completed, you should no longer have any pain on this tooth as the source of the problem has been removed.

Unfortunately there is a risk with either a pulpectomy or a root canal that your tooth may be susceptible to fracture, discoloration, or continued pain. If you are experiencing any discomfort from the inflamed tissue, your dental professional may recommend pain medication.