

## *Why see a specialist?*

Endodontists save teeth. That is our primary function. When the inside of your tooth becomes inflamed or infected, endodontic treatment performed by an endodontist, the root canal specialists, offer the best hope of saving your tooth. Get it done right the first time, and avoid the need for later re-treatment. No matter how effective modern tooth replacements are, nothing feels, looks or functions like your natural tooth.

You may have heard that implants are better than endodontic treatment. Implants have been used for a number of years with success. However, a recent study confirms that the results of endodontic treatment versus extraction with placement of an implant are virtually equal. When you consider that the extraction/implant option takes more time and is more expensive, preserving the natural tooth should be a priority.

Endodontists have two or three years of specialty training beyond dental school and they limit their practice to root canals and root canal surgery. They have extra training in the diagnosis of painful conditions of the teeth and jaws. They have learned state-of-the-art techniques, including endodontic surgery and re-treatment, and the use of the operating microscope. The microscope allows the endodontist to find canals in teeth with complicated anatomy, to remove separated instruments, to identify root fractures, and to re-treat previously treated teeth that have become reinfected.

The endodontist has specialized knowledge of the biology of the pulp, the tissue inside the tooth. This is useful when evaluating the effects of trauma to the teeth. When a tooth is injured, especially a tooth that is not yet fully formed, there can be long-term consequences for the health of the tooth. Sometimes the tooth does not fully erupt. Sometimes the living tissue inside the tooth dies, predisposing to infection. The endodontist is specially trained to evaluate, monitor and treat the consequences of tooth trauma.

Pain can be caused by many conditions of the teeth, gums and jaw. The endodontist is specially trained in the diagnosis of painful teeth. Toothache can be from dental or non-dental causes, such as sinusitis, temporomandibular joint dysfunction or muscle spasm, even heart attack. Occasionally, pain in the oral cavity can be caused by diseases of the nerves themselves. Dental causes of pain can include periodontal disease in which receding gums expose the roots or cause localized infection. Dental decay, especially decay into the pulp, can cause inflammation or infection. Eventually, the teeth may abscess, causing severe pain. Pain when chewing may also be caused by cracked or fractured teeth. The endodontist is skilled in the use of specialized tests and the interpretation of symptoms, physical findings and X-rays to determine the source of the pain.

When your tooth hurts, it is important to accurately determine the cause, and to avoid delay in treatment. If your tooth is unusually sensitive to heat or cold, or if you have pain when chewing or biting, if you experience jaw pain or swelling, an endodontist can provide you with a solution to your problem.

Root canal treatment has an unwarranted reputation for being long and painful. However, the root canal specialist can treat your tooth quickly, with a minimum of discomfort. Most patients do not require sedation for root canal therapy. When anxiety is a problem, endodontists are experienced in the use of oral sedation to make your experience as comfortable as possible.

Whether you have pain or just a suspicious X-ray, we can diagnose your problem and eliminate your pain. After your root canal therapy, you will return to your family dentist with a solid foundation for a crown or other restorative work.