



# Root Canal Diagnosis

For your dental health.

## How did my tooth become infected?

The visible, exterior layer of a tooth is called the enamel. Beneath the enamel is another hard layer, called the dentin. The dentin surrounds a small chamber at the center of the tooth that contains the pulp. Tooth pulp is a soft tissue made up of nerves, arteries, and veins. The pulp extends from the pulp chamber down through narrow channels, called the root canals, to the tips of the roots.



*Layers of a tooth*

The two most common causes of infection in the pulp are deep cavities and fractures or broken teeth. Both expose the pulp to bacteria that live in saliva. These bacteria, which are always present in your mouth, can cause an infection that can kill the pulp. Without treatment, the pus from the infection can eventually gather down at the root tip and pass into the jaw bone, causing an abscess (a pus pocket). The abscess can then damage the bone that surrounds the tooth. The resulting pressure inside the bone and ligaments surrounding the tooth can cause excruciating pain, and left untreated, can even be life threatening.



*Infected pulp*

## Symptoms vary

You may have realized that you had an infected tooth because it was sensitive to hot and cold, was swollen and painful, or had given you a bad taste in your mouth. On the other hand, you may have been completely unaware that you had an infection because you experienced no symptoms at all.



*Infection spreads*

## Root canal therapy

An infected tooth will never heal on its own, and as it gets worse, it will continue to be a source of infection that depletes your immune system, which can affect your entire body. Years ago, your only option would be for us to extract the tooth. But today, we can remove the infection with root canal therapy, and save your tooth.