1. What is a root canal treatment?
Root canal treatment is the removal of infected or inflamed pulp from the inside of the tooth. The pulp is removed from the crown and the roots of the tooth.

Pulp is the soft tissue inside the crown and roots of teeth containing nerves and blood vessels. Once an infected or inflamed pulp is removed, the tooth can function normally and usually be retained indefinitely.

2. What happens during a root canal treatment?
Your dentist will take an x-ray of the tooth and the area around it. The tooth will then be numbed (an injection) with a local anaesthetic.

All tooth decay will be removed. The dentist will gain access to the pulp chamber of the tooth and remove the pulp from the crown and roots. The root canals are cleaned and completely sealed with a filling material to prevent further infection.

Root canal treatment may be completed over several appointments.

Following the root canal treatment, the tooth will be restored with a strong filling material or crown.

3. What are the risks and complications of a root canal treatment?
In most cases, root canal treatment is successful and the tooth will no longer cause pain. However, there is always some risk depending on the condition of the tooth, the complexity of the root canals and your response to treatment. If this treatment fails, the tooth may require further treatment or extraction if it is unable to be saved.

- **Pain:** mild, temporary pain following root canal treatment may occur due to inflammation of the tissues surrounding the tooth, however severe or persistent pain may require more treatment.

- **Infection:** in most cases, treatment will completely resolve infection around a tooth, however there is some risk of an infection reoccurring. Further treatment will be required.

- **Discolouration:** a tooth may become darker following root canal treatment. There are procedures available which may lighten the tooth if this occurs.

- **File fracture:** the fine metal files used to clean inside the root canals may break during use. Further treatment may be required.

- **Tooth fracture:** root canal treatment may reduce the strength and durability of a tooth, making it more likely to fracture. Some fractures may require the tooth to be extracted. This risk is reduced by placing a strong filling or crown.

- **Perforation:** depending on the size and shape of the roots, there is some risk of creating a hole in the side of a tooth root during the cleaning process. Further treatment may be needed.

- **Death as a result of this procedure is very rare.**

4. What are the risks and complications of a local anaesthetic during a dental procedure?
This procedure will require a local anaesthetic.

- **Damage to lips and cheeks:** you may bite or rub the numbed area without realising the damage you are causing. Children may need to be supervised until the numbness has worn off.

- **Failure of local anaesthetic:** this may require a further injection of anaesthetic or a different method of anaesthesia to be used.

- **Bruising:** if you take any drug used to thin your blood, you are more likely to get a bruise as this medication may affect the way your body clots your blood. Applying a cold pack to the area will help to minimise the bruising.

- **Nerve damage:** if nerve damage happens, it is usually temporary and will get better over a period of weeks to months. Damage may cause weakness and/or numbness of the mouth, lips, tongue or face that the nerve goes to. Permanent nerve damage rarely happens.

- **Infection at site of injection:** this is uncommon however can be treated with antibiotics.

- **Allergy to the local anaesthetic solution:** is a rare complication and medical attention should be sought immediately.

Notes to talk to my dentist about:

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Crown

Pulp

Root