

## Root Canal Therapy

I am going to be very daring this month and speak of a forbidden word. For many of you from ages 30 to 80, please do not end your reading in horror as I mention the word ROOT CANAL THERAPY. The connotations and jokes regarding this dental procedure are widely know. Regularly, I hear someone in the media say the magic phrase, I'd rather have a root canal than...?.

Amazingly enough...and this is the truth...modern root canal therapy is usually so comfortable that it is the number one procedure in our office that people fall asleep during! I always say to patients, that nine out of ten times, root canal therapy is very comfortable but when a severe infection in the tooth prevents our ability to make the initial therapy comfortable, that person is the one who tells 100 friends and the other nine remain silent.

As many of you know, root canal therapy is necessary to save teeth when the nerve of the tooth is damaged usually by a large cavity or large filling that has been in for a long time and one more trauma to the tooth, i.e.: another filling or a leak in the old filling causes the nerve to just plain give up. Sometimes nerves give up and die quietly and you might never know it has died, but sometimes it can be one of the most severe pains known to man. The worst is called a necrosing pulpitis and you might know someone who could only keep the severe pain away by keeping ice on the tooth. If you are initially lucky and the nerve died quietly, then the now dead nerve material is a great feeding ground for bacteria to travel throughout your blood stream. After eating the dead nerve debris, the bacteria grow and form and abscess, in the bone around the tooth - then you may have a swollen face or pressure feeling and bite sensitivity.