POST-TREATMENT INFORMATION:

ROOT CANAL TREATMENT

POST-TREATMENT – BASIC INFORMATION

1) Pain after your procedure may occur, but is typically mild. In a few cases, prescription pain medication may be required. (Read under the PAIN heading on page 2 for more detailed information)
2) Symptoms of infection (called a “flare-up”) may appear after treatment uncertain kinds of cases. Flare-ups are impossible to predict, but are usually manageable. (Read under INFECTION heading on page 2 for more detailed information)
3) Contact us if you think you might be experiencing a flare-up.
4) Your tooth must be restored by your dentist within 4 weeks after treatment. Waiting longer may compromise the health and/or stability of the tooth.
5) Over-the-counter pain medication dosages: Ibuprofen (Advil) 600mg every six hours; Acetaminophen (Tylenol) 500mg every six hours. With elevated pain levels, both can be taken (at their full dose), and alternated every three hours.

RESTORING THE TOOTH

Root canal treatment is not truly complete until a permanent restoration is placed on the treated tooth by your dentist. Immediately after root canal treatment, a temporary restoration is placed in the tooth. This temporary filling is meant to last only until you return to your dentist for final restoration. It is important to have teeth restored no longer than four (4) weeks after root canal treatment. After this time period, the tooth is more susceptible to re-infection by oral bacteria, which may necessitate another root canal procedure or extraction of the tooth.

Important: Until a root canal treated tooth is properly restored following treatment, tooth cracking or fracturing is a potential risk. Root canal treated teeth are structurally weakened by the procedure. Your dentist will restore the tooth to proper strength and function with the final restoration. Until then, however, chewing and functioning on the treated tooth is strongly discouraged.

IF YOU NEED IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE:

Dr. Warren’s contact information:
Office: (317) 876-3636
Cell/Pager: (317) 910-6705 (after hours)
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PAIN

In the majority of cases, pain after root canal treatment (if present) will be mild, usually lasting anywhere from 0 to 3 days. Over-the-counter pain medications will typically be adequate. However, pain characteristics after treatment may differ from case to case…

Sometimes, pain may be moderate or severe during this initial phase, requiring prescription pain medication. Research shows that patients with higher pain levels before treatment are more likely to have higher pain levels immediately after treatment. Additionally, patients with pain of long duration before treatment are more likely to experience some pain for extended periods after treatment. It is important to understand, however, that post-treatment pain characteristics cannot always be predicted, and some cases will not fit into these general guidelines.

Often, persistent pain after treatment has a simple explanation, such as a “high” temporary restoration causing a heavy bite on the treated tooth. This type of pain is very easily addressed with a bite adjustment. Occasionally, however, pain may persist for reasons not explained by any apparent physical cause. Though rare, this type of pain may even persist for several weeks before finally resolving on its own. And on very rare occasions, unusually persistent pain that does not respond to any treatment measures may require re-treatment of the root canal, surgery, or even extraction. Questions about post-treatment pain should always be expressed directly to our office.

INFECTION

Signs of infection (swelling, fever, pain, malaise) after root canal treatment may develop, and are usually limited to two types of cases: NECROTIC and RETREATMENT cases. Bacterial debris originating from inside the tooth causes these symptoms. During treatment, bacterial debris can be expressed out of the tooth and into the surrounding tissue. This happens to some degree in every case where bacteria is present and is unavoidable. Typically, the reaction to this debris is negligible or slight. In some cases, however, more significant symptoms of infection may develop (called a “flare up”). It is impossible to predict which cases will result in a flare-up. They occur even in cases that show no symptoms before treatment.

Be assured that a post-treatment flare-up, in the majority cases, does NOT meansomething has gone wrong with your treatment. It is simply your body’s reaction to the altered bacterial environment and will resolve in time. Antibiotic treatment may be necessary. On occasion, additional procedures may also be necessary. If you suspect you are experiencing a flare-up, please contact us immediately.