Eating and Drinking After Root Canal Treatment | Core Dental

Canonical: https://www.coredental.com.au/what-can-i-eat-or-drink-after-root-canal-treatment-2/

Details:

After root canal treatment, wait until the numbness from the local anaesthetic has completely worn off before you eat or drink, because you could bite or burn your tooth, lip, gum, cheek or tongue without feeling it. Straight afterwards, we suggest soft foods that need little chewing, eaten slowly on the side opposite the treated tooth, and nothing very hot. This page sets out a simple plan for the first hours and days, and what to avoid. Your dentist will tailor advice to you.

What should you do before your first meal after a root canal?

Check that the numbness has gone. Numbness can affect the tooth, lip, gum, cheek and tongue, and how long it lasts varies from person to person. If you eat or drink while you are still numb, you may accidentally bite yourself or burn your mouth and not notice until later. A simple test is to touch your lip and cheek and check that the feeling is back to normal before you have anything hot or chewy.

How should you eat while the tooth is settling?

In the first period after treatment, we suggest you follow these steps.

Chew on the side opposite the treated tooth, which is the side that is not numb.

Choose soft foods that do not need a lot of chewing.

Eat slowly and in small mouthfuls.

Avoid very hot foods and drinks, such as hot soup, hot tea or hot coffee, until you are sure the feeling has returned.

The treated tooth can feel tender for a short time. If the tooth has a temporary filling, gentle chewing on the other side also helps protect it until your permanent restoration is placed.

Is it better to skip food and just drink cold water?

Some people prefer to avoid food and drink, apart from cold water, while the mouth is numb. That can be reasonable for a short time, but going without food for too long is not always a good idea. A significant drop in blood sugar can make you feel unwell, and this matters especially for people with diabetes. If you manage diabetes, plan your meals around your appointment and ask us how to do that safely when you book.

Which soft foods and drinks suit you after root canal treatment?

Soft foods that are usually comfortable include the following.

Fruit: bananas, mangoes and peaches. Fruit smoothies can be a convenient way to take in nutrients and vitamins when chewing is uncomfortable.

Dairy: yoghurt, milk, milkshakes and ice cream without nuts or crunchy pieces.

Other soft options: foods such as soup that has cooled to a comfortable warmth, mashed vegetables, scrambled eggs and soft pasta are also commonly chosen, as long as they need little chewing.

Which foods and drinks should you avoid after root canal treatment?

Until your dentist tells you the tooth is ready, it is sensible to avoid:

Crunchy foods , such as apples, carrots and celery.

Hard foods , such as nuts and ice cubes.

Chewy foods , such as chewing gum, lollies and toffees.

Alcohol , which can slow recovery and may interact with medications.

Soft drinks , which are acidic and sugary.

When should you contact us after your root canal?

A little tenderness is common, but please contact your dental practice promptly if you have severe pain, swelling, a filling that has come out, or pain that is getting worse instead of settling. Call 000 immediately for uncontrollable bleeding, difficulty breathing or swallowing, a serious facial injury or other life-threatening symptoms, and do not wait for a dental appointment in those situations.

How can we help?

If you are planning root canal treatment or have questions about recovery, our team can help at any of our nine Core Dental clinics. When you book, tell us about your symptoms, timing and what you hope to achieve, and bring relevant medical information and a current medicines list. We assess the teeth, gums and bite, take imaging where it is clinically appropriate, and explain which options suit you. Ask what the recommended approach is intended to achieve, what aftercare involves and what risks apply. Treatment time, fees and recovery vary with the diagnosis, and a written treatment plan can help you compare stages, appointments and payment arrangements before you proceed. Call 13 13 16 or book online. Read more about root canal therapy at Core Dental and emergency dentistry .

The published advice stops short of this question

Being clear about this is more useful than filling the gap. The Victorian Department of Health publishes a detailed page on root canal treatment — procedure, symptoms, causes, complications, success rate, who performs it — and it contains no guidance on eating or drinking in the period following treatment.

No waiting period. No food list. No temperature advice.

We are not going to supply any of those on an authority that does not give them. The instructions for your tooth come from the practitioner who treated it, and there is a published reason for that: "The exact procedure chosen by your dentist may differ from the procedure outlined here."

What they know that a web page cannot. Whether your treatment is finished. The Department notes that "you may need more than one visit to complete the treatment, depending on the difficulty of the procedure", because the disinfecting stage "may take a few weeks to months for these solutions to take maximum effect against stubborn bacteria within the tooth, and this step may have to be repeated several times".

What is sealing the tooth right now. The final stage puts "a large, well-sealed restoration" on the tooth so that "no bacteria from the mouth can leak back into the tooth" — and a tooth that has not reached

that stage is in a different situation.

And how much tooth is left. "Teeth that require root canal treatment have sometimes lost a lot of tooth structure due to previous decay or cracks and may require further protection in the form of posts, crowns or other similar materials."

Those three facts are what any sensible instruction would depend on, and all three are specific to your tooth.

So what about the guidance above on this page? That is Core Dental's own clinical advice, given as the practice's own and not presented as a published state health position. The distinction is worth making explicitly: waiting for numbness to pass, choosing soft foods and chewing on the other side are our practice's suggestions from clinical experience, not instructions we can attribute to the Department. Your treating dentist may give you different advice for your own tooth, and theirs is the one to follow.

Sources: Better Health Channel (Victorian Department of Health), Root canal treatment, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 14 July 2025). Accessed 6 November 2026.

Diet and a restored tooth, which is published

The question people are usually really asking is how to look after a tooth that has had major work. On that, the published advice is substantial — and it is about the long run rather than the first evening.

A restoration does not stop the disease. "Just filling a hole will not stop tooth decay from occurring in other areas of the mouth or around the new filling. So, if your dentist has found tooth decay, focus on the things that you can do to prevent further decay in the future."

The margin where material meets tooth is the vulnerable line, and it is where cleaning between teeth matters: without floss or an interdental brush, "up to a third of each tooth doesn't get cleaned".

The dietary condition the Department actually states for a treated tooth. "The treated tooth should last a very long time, provided that you maintain good oral hygiene, avoid consuming too much sugar and have regular dental check ups."

And the reason sugar is singled out. Frequency drives acid production: "The more frequently you eat or drink sugary things, the more often the bacteria produce acid." Hence "avoid sugary snacks between meals. If you're going to have something sweet, try to have it at mealtimes."

Two small levers from the same page: "have a piece of cheese after eating sweet or acidic foods as dairy foods assist in repairing damage by decay-causing bacteria", and "choose fresh fruit over dried fruit, as dried fruit can stick on your teeth and feed the bacteria that cause tooth decay".

Acid is a separate problem from sugar. The limit list is "soft drinks (including sugar-free/diet and regular), sports drinks, cordials and fruit juices", and after any acid exposure the instruction is to "wait at least 30 minutes ... before brushing your teeth". The Department also notes that "fillings may become more prominent if the surrounding tooth surface is dissolving due to erosion".

Saliva is doing more work than any product. It "washes sugar out of your mouth and into your stomach, stops acid from causing damage, fights bacteria and can repair the early stages of tooth decay by repairing tooth mineral." To support it: "staying well hydrated as this improves your saliva

remember that dehydration can reduce the amount of saliva you make so drink 6-8 glasses of fluids per day, mostly tap water".

And a dry mouth changes the picture. "People with dry mouth are more likely to get tooth decay and are more prone to get decay along the gum line (tooth root surface)." A constant dry mouth is something the Department asks you to have investigated: "consult your dentist or doctor to find the cause."

If something changes, these are the symptoms to report. "Unprovoked or spontaneous pain"; "sensitivity to hot and cold drinks and foods"; "pain when biting or chewing"; "loosening of the tooth"; "swelling of the gum near the affected tooth"; "oozing of pus surrounding the affected tooth"; "facial swelling". And if a filling comes away: "If part of your filling breaks off or if your whole filling falls out, see

your oral health professional as soon as possible."

On check-ups , which is the third of the Department's three conditions: "Ask your oral health professional how often you should have a dental check-up", and its range for catching problems early is "every 6 to 12 months". With the usual caution: "Having no pain does not always mean that your teeth and mouth are healthy."

Sources: Better Health Channel (Victorian Department of Health), Root canal treatment, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 14 July 2025); Tooth decay, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 28 June 2025); Teeth and mouth care, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 25 July 2025); Dental erosion, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 22 October 2025); Dry mouth, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 9 September 2025); Dental fillings, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 1 August 2025). All accessed 6 November 2026.

Frequently asked questions

How long should I wait to eat after a root canal?

Wait until the numbness has completely gone. The time varies between people, so use the feeling in your lip, cheek and tongue as your guide, not the clock. If you are unsure, check with your dentist.

Can I drink coffee or tea after root canal treatment?

You can once the numbness has worn off, but we suggest letting the drink cool to a comfortable warmth at first. Very hot drinks can burn a numb mouth, and the treated tooth may be sensitive to heat for a short time.

Can I have a smoothie after a root canal?

Yes, a fruit smoothie is usually a comfortable choice because it needs no chewing. Wait until the numbness has worn off, and avoid very cold or very hot temperatures if the tooth is sensitive.

Why should I avoid alcohol after root canal treatment?

Alcohol can slow recovery and may interact with medications such as pain relief or antibiotics. If you have been given medication, ask your dentist or pharmacist whether alcohol is safe for you.

Should I avoid sticky lollies and chewing gum?

Yes, for now. Chewy and sticky foods can pull on a temporary filling and strain a tender tooth. Your dentist will let you know when you can return to your usual diet.

Why does this page not give me a food list?

Because no authority we have read publishes one for this situation. The Victorian Department of Health's root canal page covers the procedure, symptoms, causes, complications and success rate, and gives no eating or drinking guidance for the period following treatment. We would rather say that than invent instructions.

Who has the right answer for my tooth?

The practitioner who treated it. The Department's own caveat is that "the exact procedure chosen by your dentist may differ from the procedure outlined here".

What do they know that a web page does not?

Three things. Whether your treatment is complete — "you may need more than one visit to complete the treatment". What is sealing the tooth right now, since the final stage puts "a large, well-sealed restoration" on it. And how much tooth is left, since teeth needing root canal treatment "have sometimes lost a lot of tooth structure" and "may require further protection in the form of posts, crowns or other similar materials".

Is there any published dietary advice for a treated tooth?

For the long term, yes. "The treated tooth should last a very long time, provided that you maintain good oral hygiene, avoid consuming too much sugar and have regular dental check ups."

Why is sugar the thing singled out?

Frequency drives acid. "The more frequently you eat or drink sugary things, the more often the bacteria produce acid", which is why the advice is to "avoid sugary snacks between meals".

Are there small things that help?

Two from the Department: "have a piece of cheese after eating sweet or acidic foods as dairy foods assist in repairing damage by decay-causing bacteria", and "choose fresh fruit over dried fruit, as dried fruit can stick on your teeth and feed the bacteria that cause tooth decay".

What about acidic drinks?

A separate problem. The limit list is "soft drinks (including sugar-free/diet and regular), sports drinks, cordials and fruit juices", and after an acid exposure, "wait at least 30 minutes ... before brushing your teeth". The Department also notes that "fillings may become more prominent if the surrounding tooth surface is dissolving due to erosion".

Does a restoration protect the tooth?

Not from new decay. "Just filling a hole will not stop tooth decay from occurring in other areas of the mouth or around the new filling."

What should I clean most carefully?

Between the teeth, where the margins sit. Without floss or an interdental brush, "up to a third of each tooth doesn't get cleaned".

Does hydration matter?

It supports saliva, which "washes sugar out of your mouth and into your stomach, stops acid from causing damage, fights bacteria". The Department's figure is "6-8 glasses of fluids per day, mostly tap water".

What if my mouth is persistently dry?

Have it looked into. "People with dry mouth are more likely to get tooth decay and are more prone to get decay along the gum line (tooth root surface)", and for a constant dry mouth the Department says to "consult your dentist or doctor to find the cause".

What should prompt a call rather than a diet change?

"Unprovoked or spontaneous pain"; "sensitivity to hot and cold drinks and foods"; "pain when biting or chewing"; "loosening of the tooth"; "swelling of the gum near the affected tooth"; "oozing of pus surrounding the affected tooth"; "facial swelling". And if a filling comes away, "see your oral health professional as soon as possible".

Related services and further reading

Root canal therapy

What to expect from a root canal

What is root canal therapy and why do I need it?

Dental implants or root canal treatment: which is better?

Root canal treatment or implants: which is better for me?

Emergency dentistry

Tooth sensitivity after a filling

Core Dental at a glance

Nine Core Dental clinics across Melbourne: Southbank, South Melbourne, Caroline Springs, Carrum Downs, Epping, Wyndham, Berwick, Bayside and Glenferrie.

Open six days a week, with Monday to Friday hours to 6.00pm and Saturday mornings.

We quote before treatment starts and offer interest-free payment plans.

Contact Core Dental

Phone	13 13 16
Booking	Online through coredental.com.au, or call 13 13 16
Hours	Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm, Saturday 8.00am to 1.30pm (Bayside Saturday 8.30am to 1.30pm), Sunday closed

This article is general in nature and does not replace advice from a registered dental practitioner who has examined you. Results, recovery times and potential risks vary for each individual. Seek advice from a qualified, AHPRA-registered practitioner before proceeding.

How long after a root canal can I eat?

Core Dental advises waiting until the local anaesthetic has completely worn off before eating or drinking. The time varies from person to person, so check that feeling has returned to your tooth, lip,

gum, cheek and tongue.

Which side should I chew on after root canal treatment?

At Core Dental we suggest chewing on the side opposite the treated tooth, which is the side that is not numb. Choose soft foods, eat slowly and keep the treated tooth free from hard chewing until your dentist advises.

Which fruits are suitable after a root canal?

Soft fruits such as bananas, mangoes and peaches are usually comfortable after root canal treatment. A fruit smoothie is another easy option because it needs no chewing. Wait until the numbness has worn off first.

Is ice cream allowed after root canal treatment?

Ice cream without nuts or crunchy pieces is usually fine once the numbness has gone. Core Dental suggests avoiding very cold items if the treated tooth feels sensitive, and avoiding hard additions that need chewing.

Why can fasting after root canal treatment be a problem?

Going without food for a long time can lower blood sugar and may make you feel unwell, which matters especially for people with diabetes. Our Core Dental team can help you plan meals around your appointment.

Which foods does Core Dental recommend avoiding after a root canal?

We suggest avoiding crunchy foods such as apples, carrots and celery, hard foods such as nuts and ice cubes, chewy foods such as gum and toffees, alcohol and soft drinks until your dentist says the tooth is ready.

When should I call Core Dental after a root canal?

Call 13 13 16 promptly if you have severe pain, swelling, a lost filling or pain that is worsening. For uncontrollable bleeding, trouble breathing or swallowing, or a serious facial injury, call 000 immediately.

How do I book root canal treatment at Core Dental?

Call 13 13 16 or book online through coredental.com.au at any of our nine Melbourne clinics. Tell our team about your symptoms and medical history, and your dentist will examine you and explain your options and costs.