Root Canals Lead to Infection! Here's what I'd do if I already had one Transcript

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Root canals and why they raise concern

If you've already had a root canal, do you need to be worried? Let's talk about this. So as a dentist of nearly 29 years now, I have seen a lot about root canals.

I performed hundreds of them myself before I really started researching and finding out what is going on inside of that tooth. So let's get really down to the bottom line here.

What would I do if I had a tooth that had a root canal in my own mouth? Or what would I do if this were my husband or my child? And honestly, those situations may be a little different.

First, let's talk about why this is even a potential concern. Root canals are a great invention. You're able to still continue chewing with your tooth, smiling with your tooth.

It's amazing. The root canal procedure removes the nerve and the blood vessels of the tooth, disinfects the inside, and then seals it all up. So the tooth is able to stay there and continue functioning.

But what isn't really talked about is that it's a dead tooth now. There's no life. The nerve has been removed. The blood vessels have been removed. So there's no blood flow.

There's no lymphatic flow. So it means no immune cells can get to take care of anything inside of that tooth. And the little known fact is that inside of that tooth, there's literally a mile of tiny tubes.

Now, every dentist knows this. We were taught this first year of dental school. Those little tubes called dentional tubules have little extensions of those nerves and blood vessels.

This is why when you tap your tooth, you can feel it because there's little nerve extensions going all the way out to the outside of the tooth. It's impossible to clean and remove all of those little tiny nerve and blood vessel extensions.

Again, dentists know this as well. When we fill a root canal tooth, we fill the main canal. But there's no way we're able to clean and fill all those tiny little tubes that extend off of that main canal.

How a root canal tooth can become a dead space

That's where the problem lies. Because now this dead tooth that has no blood flow, no immune cells can get inside of it, has dead tissue inside. What does that mean?

Well, eventually the body figures this out. Bacteria find this dead tissue and start to congregate. I like to think of it as having parties. They start to have parties and now your immune system or the police force have to come and constantly quiet that party down.

Well, now that's your body working really hard to deal with this nonstop party going on. Eventually something else goes on. There's a robbery across town and the police have to go, okay, one car can stay here, but the rest of us, we have to go over here.

Now, the one car that's left around the tooth is not enough to keep that party down, and those bacteria start to spread. They start to eat away bone around the end of the tooth.

Now, every time you bite on that tooth, you're sending infection throughout the entire body. That's spreading everywhere, and some places in the body are particularly prone to getting infected by these kinds of bugs.

The heart in general, the entire circulatory system is really at risk for those kinds of bacteria as are joints. So these are things that we have to be concerned about.

So what would I do if I already had one? Would I have that tooth removed to get rid of the risk of this potential ongoing infection and immune system just distraction in my body?

Well, let's talk through me individually specifically. I've actually had a lot of health concerns over the last few years. I had challenges with mercury.

I've consistently struggled with gut health problems with a lot of food sensitivities. And honestly, I'm always teetering on the edge of being well or not.

And I work so hard at it. So for me, the last thing I would need is one more thing that might tip me over the edge.

Health risks and when removal may be best

So if I had a root canal tooth in my mouth, I would be in my surgeon's chair tomorrow and that tooth would be out. Now why am I so ready to say that? Well, I know my health situation.

I know that I really don't have some extra resources or extra reserve to give. and I have a lot at stake. You know, I really need to continue being able to function as I am.

I also have watched and placed hundreds of ceramic dental implants. I know how successful they are. If my tooth had to be removed, I would have a new tooth in there with six to seven months or so.

And I would live with it in the meantime. Nobody loves to live without a tooth, but I would do it if I had to. That's my own personal situation. Now, how about my son, who's never had any health concerns?

He's 20 years old. He's, you know, healthy as a horse. What would we do in that situation? Well, again, I would consider his medical issues. I would say, okay, Is he healthy?

Can he have the immune strength needed to keep that tooth happy and healthy, to keep those bacteria, you know, that party of bacteria really down? Well, actually, if we want to get real specific, he had surgeries when he was very, very young.

He was born very prematurely. and he had surgeries. One in particular was because his heart wasn't completely formed. Remember I talked about bacteria from root canals love hearts.

There is no way I would let that root canal stay in his head even though he was healthy. Can you see why? Because of heart health. So this is the question you need to ask yourself individually.

What is my overall health? What is my overall health risk? Do I have a predisposition to heart disease, to autoimmune conditions, to joint issues? Are these things that are in my family history?

Have I had a family member who's had Alzheimer's? The brain is another place that these bacteria love to go. If any of those things were on my list, I would absolutely take that tooth out.

If you are my 19 year old daughter and you just had this tooth knocked when you were 11, let's say, you know, on a bike and no health concerns at all, nothing going on, completely healthy, no food sensitivities, no autoimmune disease, then what I would do in your situation is I would take a cone beam CT scan today.

I would look at it and I would say, I see no infection building up in your bone. And a cone beam CT scan is really the only way to clearly see this. I see no infection building up in your bone.

Okay, daughter, we're going to take another cone beam CT scan in two years time.

Personalized decisions, monitoring, and replacement options

We're going to recheck it. We're going to see what it looks like. But in the meantime, if you feel like you have fatigue that's unexplained, if you have hormone issues that are unexplained, if you have sinus problems, if you have any sort of autoimmune triggers or food sensitivities, we are going to get back to this tooth immediately and look at it because it might be that your immune system is overwhelmed and that tooth isn't able to be cared for.

If you don't, then we check it in two years, we say, ah, looks great on an x-ray, medical history, looks great, no symptoms, no problem. And you may feel entirely comfortable moving forward, just keeping your immune system strong, adding oregano oil, adding garlic, adding things that are immune builders.

This is a very personal conversation. So I, as a dentist, cannot tell you that I recommend every single root canal tooth be removed because that's not true.

For me, that is not true. It is very personal and very specific to your health situation, your current health concerns, your predispositions, whether it's genetic or environmental, things that you may be prone to.

We take all of that into consideration and then you get the decision. You get to decide if it stays there and you keep chewing and smiling with it or if it's going to be removed.

Rest assured, however, that there are ways to replace this tooth. If you choose to have it removed, we can absolutely replace this with a ceramic dental implant in most cases.

Sometimes there's literally no bone. We have to offer you some other options. but this is how I would handle it. So don't be afraid. If you've had a root canal, take a minute, breathe, and step back far enough to say, what does my health look like?

Do I feel like I can handle this right now? Can I take things that support my immune system? Am I going to be okay? And can I watch it closely enough?

Am I in tune enough to my health that I can watch this? If all of those things are yes, then you may choose to leave that tooth alone and just have it monitored frequently by a dentist.

If you say, no, my health is already tipped over. I've already jumped off the cliff with this one. I have X, Y, or Z autoimmune condition or heart condition.

I'm already on medication. No, I can't have one more thing that could potentially compromise my health. Now, is this saying that root canals could be the one missing piece for every single health condition?

Absolutely not. But a root canal will tax your immune system if it's reinfected. And that taxing is what then affects the rest of your systems. So it can contribute to health care issues or to health issues or even health escalations.

So hopefully this has been a real honest review and look at what root canals even are, why they could be concerning, and when you personally need to be concerned about it.

If you enjoyed this information, please subscribe, please share this video with anybody who might have a root canal and who might be concerned about it.

If you're local to Utah, we would love to see you here at Total Care Dental. And if you're not, there's a directory on my website at livingwellwithdrmichelle.com.

because my mission is to help you live well.