

# Don't Pull That Tooth



At one time, dentists had no choice but to extract an infected tooth. Pulling an infected tooth solved one problem but led to others—poor appearance, change in bite, difficulty chewing food, and less support for adjacent teeth. But tooth extraction is rarely necessary now, thanks to a procedure known as root canal. The dentist (or more likely a specialist known as an endodontist) removes the injured and diseased dental pulp (the inner core that contains nerves, blood vessels, and other tooth tissues) but leaves the tooth intact.

If you're told you need root canal therapy, be sure to let your dentist or endodontist know if you have a heart murmur, history of rheumatic heart disease, or mitral valve prolapse. If so, you may need to take an antibiotic before undergoing this procedure.