

LOS ANGELES HEALTHCARE PROFILES

Not Your Mother's Root Canal

With a skilled endodontist, revolutionary technology makes today's root canals dramatically more comfortable and effective than ever before.



Root canals get a bad rap. They're dreaded, avoided, and overused as a punchline. But the truth is, they just don't live up to their infamous reputation.

"One of the most common misconceptions is that root canals are painful, but that's just not true," says Alan Law, D.D.S., Ph.D., president of the American Association of Endodontists. "There's no doubt the infection and inflammation associated with tooth disease is uncomfortable, but the root canal treatment itself is what will actually take the pain away."

The dental specialists known as endodontists are the most qualified practitioners to perform root canals in the safest, most comfortable, and most effective manner. These specialists complete four years of dental school plus an additional two years of advanced training. "We spend much of our training learning how to make patients the most comfortable," says Dr. Law.

Endodontists have access to and training in the industry's most advanced technologies, including cone-beam computed tomography (CBCT). "This 3D



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technology allows us to see the tooth and root anatomy very clearly. The better we can see, the better we're able to clean, sanitize, and fill the diseased root, which results in a reduced risk of disease recurrence," Dr. Law explains.

Don't Delay

Contrary to common assumption, tooth pain will not just disappear over time. "Pain is the body's warning sign of disease or infection. Addressing pain early on can avoid more costly and complex treatments later," says Dr. Law.

For example, mild tooth sensitivity might signal a budding cavity. If the cavity isn't properly addressed, bacteria may gather and cause infection. If that infection isn't treated with a root canal by a trained specialist, the tooth may become too damaged to salvage, resulting in tooth removal and the need for a dental implant—an expensive and time-consuming consequence.

"Maintaining your natural teeth is always the best option," says Dr. Law. "Teeth are not only essential for chewing and maintaining a healthy diet, but they're also important for proper speech."

Everyone Is a Candidate

Though root canals are often associated with older patients or those with poor oral health, Dr. Law asserts that isn't always the case. "My youngest patient was 7 years old and my oldest was 102," he says.

Young children are susceptible to root canals when a fall or injury knocks a tooth loose or out. Likewise, professional athletes who experience repeated oral trauma are also likely candidates. Even healthy young adults with fillings from childhood may need endodontic care at some point. No matter the age or reason, seeking qualified endodontic treatment is vital to long-term oral and overall systemic health.

"When people ask what I do for a living, I say I improve people's lives," Dr. Law concludes. "Patients tell me all the time that their procedure was nothing compared to what they thought it was going to be."

Find Your Endodontist

Learn more about the safety and effectiveness of modern root canal treatment at aae.org. Visit findmyendodontist.com to locate a qualified specialist near you.

