I've Been Told I Need a Root Canal - Should I Be Scared?

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Description:

Root canals have a terrifying reputation - but the founder of Smile Solutions had a traumatic one at age 11 with no anaesthetic. That experience is exactly why Smile Solutions has four specialist endodontists and the most advanced pain management technology in Melbourne.

Details:

Smile Solutions Root Canal Treatment: Why This Practice Was Built Around Your Fear

The moment you hear "root canal," something tightens in your chest. A flash of every film and TV show where that phrase was used as the ultimate expression of suffering.

You're not alone in that reaction. Root canal treatment carries one of the most fearsome reputations in dentistry, and for many patients, that fear is entirely real and entirely understandable.

But here's something worth knowing before we go any further: the man who founded Smile Solutions had a root canal as an 11-year-old child so traumatic it changed the entire course of his life.

The story behind the practice

Dr Kia Pajouhesh was 11 years old when a dentist in Brighton, England performed a root canal on him with no anaesthetic. The dental assistant held him down by lying across his chest while he screamed. His mother sat in the room, helpless, watching. The dentist perforated his tooth in three locations.

That single appointment gave Kia a lifelong dental phobia.

And within a year, it inspired him to become a dentist.

Not because he wanted to replicate that experience, but because he wanted to build something that was the absolute opposite of it. A place where no one would ever feel what he felt in that chair in Brighton. A place with the technology, the experienced specialists, the anaesthetic protocols, and the culture to make root canal treatment, of all things, a genuinely manageable experience for every patient who walks through the door.

This is why Smile Solutions has four specialist endodontists. Not general dentists who occasionally perform root canals, but board-registered specialists in endodontics whose entire professional focus is this procedure, delivered with a gentle and caring approach, free from unnecessary pain.

What a modern root canal actually involves

The root canal treatment of 2026 is not the root canal of your grandmother's era, or of Kia's childhood. The procedure has been transformed by technology and the kind of deep specialist training that only comes from dedicating an entire career to a single field.

Here's what the experience looks like at Smile Solutions.

Your appointment begins with a thorough assessment using digital imaging and, where appropriate, cone beam CT scanning from Collins Street Imaging on Level 9 of the Melbourne building. This gives your endodontist a precise three-dimensional view of the root canal system before treatment begins, so your treatment plan is grounded in the clearest possible clinical picture.

Anaesthesia is administered using the DentaPen computerised injection system or the STA Wand, technology specifically designed to deliver local anaesthetic slowly, precisely, and with minimal discomfort. This is not the traditional sharp needle injection. Most patients are genuinely surprised by how little they feel.

Once the area is completely numb, your endodontist uses operating microscopes to work at a magnification that simply isn't possible with the naked eye. This precision allows them to locate, clean, and seal canal systems that would be invisible or inaccessible in conventional treatment. It's the difference between a specialist and a generalist, and no amount of marketing can replicate it.

The inside of the tooth is cleaned and disinfected using a combination of hand and rotary instruments, with a process refined over decades of specialist practice. The canal is then sealed with a biocompatible material to prevent reinfection.

Most patients describe the procedure as feeling like having a filling placed. Some feel nothing beyond mild pressure. The relief that often follows, because the infected nerve has been removed, means many patients feel significantly better after treatment than before.

What about patients who are genuinely anxious?

Professor Chankhrit Sathorn, one of Australia's most respected endodontic specialists, practises at Smile Solutions. His expertise extends beyond clinical skill to a genuinely patient-centred approach that has put even the most phobic patients at ease.

For patients who can't manage the procedure with local anaesthetic alone, a range of sedation options are available. Happy gas, oral sedation, and IV sedation (twilight sleep) administered by a specialist anaesthetist can all be arranged. You will not be told to simply "push through it." You will not be held down. You will not be left to manage your anxiety alone.

Your comfort is taken seriously here, not as an afterthought, but as a core part of how care is delivered.

When is a root canal actually necessary?

Root canal treatment is recommended when the nerve of a tooth becomes infected or irreversibly damaged. This can happen because of deep decay, repeated dental procedures on the same tooth, a crack or chip, or trauma.

Signs that you might need a root canal include severe tooth pain when biting or chewing, prolonged sensitivity to hot or cold, darkening of the tooth, or swelling and tenderness in the nearby gum.

Root canal treatment is usually the alternative to extraction. Saving your natural tooth, when possible, is almost always preferable to losing it and managing the consequences through bridges, implants, or dentures.

It's also worth understanding that a failing root canal, one where a previous treatment hasn't fully resolved the infection, can act as a chronic bacterial reservoir, providing ongoing low-grade access for pathogenic bacteria to the bloodstream over months or years, often with no obvious pain or symptoms. If you have a previously root-treated tooth that is symptomatic, tender, or showing changes on imaging, it warrants prompt specialist assessment rather than ongoing monitoring and deferral. Re-treatment by a specialist endodontist, or extraction and replacement, is almost always preferable to long-term retention of an infected tooth.

A specialist endodontist will always be honest with you about whether your tooth is saveable and what the realistic prognosis is if you proceed. At Smile Solutions, you'll receive a clear explanation and a full written quote before any treatment begins, because you should be informed and empowered at every step.

The technology available at Smile Solutions

- Four specialist endodontists, board-registered with AHPRA - Operating microscopes for precision root canal treatment - DentaPen and STA Wand injection technology that minimises discomfort - Digital dental X-rays and cone beam CT at Collins Street Imaging (Level 9) - Happy gas, oral sedation, and IV sedation available - Rubber dam isolation for every endodontic procedure

What to do next

If you've been told you need a root canal, don't ignore the advice. An untreated infected tooth doesn't resolve on its own, and the longer it's left, the more complex, and potentially more serious, the treatment becomes.

Call Smile Solutions on 13 13 96 or book online. No referral is required. Your initial consultation is complimentary, and you'll receive a clear, honest assessment of your situation before any decisions are made. The specialists here are ready to answer your questions, address your concerns, and explain exactly what your treatment involves.

Kia built this practice so that no one would have to experience what he experienced at age 11. What happened to him in Brighton is the reason Smile Solutions exists, and it's the reason that root canal treatment here, delivered with clinical precision and genuine care, is nothing like the story you've been dreading.