

# Endodontists Battle Tooth Pain—And Misconceptions

## *Dental Specialists Save Natural Teeth And Restore The Reputation Of Root Canal Treatment*

(NAPSA)—Do the words “root canal” leave you unsettled, anxious and fearful? If so, you are not alone. A recent survey by the American Association of Endodontists (AAE) found that nearly half of respondents believe a root canal to be “excruciatingly painful.” The reality is that root canal treatments are virtually painless and provide patients with instant pain relief.

“People come into my office every day apprehensive about getting a root canal,” says Dr. James A. Abbott, an endodontist in Santa Rosa, Calif. “But these fears are undeserved.” New technologies and the advanced training of endodontists have revolutionized the treatment, making it more hero than villain.

Endodontists, the dentists who specialize in root canal treatment, save more than 17 million natural teeth each year. Yet they spend a lot of time dispelling myths about root canal treatment—and explaining what they do for a living.

“At a cocktail party, when I tell people I’m an endodontist, they say ‘What’s that?’” says Dr. Terry A. Propper, an endodontist in Brentwood, Tenn. “Then, when I explain that I’m a dentist who specializes in root canal treatment, they get a pained expression.”

Since the notorious image of the root canal doesn’t reflect today’s reality, the AAE set out to change the procedure’s reputation. In an effort to raise awareness about root canals, as well as endodontics as a specialty, the AAE has introduced the first ever Root Canal Awareness Week this year.

“It may sound peculiar to dedicate a week to a dental procedure, but Root Canal Awareness Week has an important educational purpose,” said Dr. John S. Olmsted,



AAE president, of Greensboro, N.C. “Many people don’t know that root canal treatment is no more uncomfortable than getting a filling placed. It’s a beneficial treatment that eliminates pain and helps people keep their natural teeth.”

In fact, research is showing that saving natural teeth has extensive health implications. A December 2005 study in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine found that tooth loss was associated with a greater risk of heart disease, with those who had lost the most teeth at the greatest risk. This remained the case even when other risk factors such as smoking, alcohol and obesity were taken into account. Another study, published in the November 2006 Journal of Dental Research, found a relationship between endodontic disease—which root canals treat—and coronary heart disease.

Dr. Propper says she always asks her patients at the end of a root canal procedure how the appointment went. “They always say ‘it was so much easier than I expected.’ The truth is that people come to us in pain—and they leave feeling better.”

For more information, visit [www.rootcanalspecialists.org](http://www.rootcanalspecialists.org).