



## **New Process for Root Canals Ease the Pain**

By Emilyy Baucum

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(Springfield, MO) -- 15 million root canals are performed each year, and it's a safe bet 15 million horror stories have been told about that procedure.

But new technology may be easing the pain.

A root canal basically cleanses the tooth by removing nerve tissue after it's been damaged so a patient can get a filling.

Up until recently, it used to be an extremely painful procedure that patients dreaded.

But doctors say there's no reason to be scared.

Dale Stowell has been to the dentist many times, but never for a root canal.

"Back in the 1970s when my mom had a few, I heard terrible stories," he says. "She was laid up for several days and just had some problems, so I was always worried about them."

He's a little nervous.

"I'll be awake for the whole thing," he says.

And doctors say they're used to patients having cold feet.

"A lot of people are scared to death," Dr. Mark Massey says. "People at work have told them stories and their families have told them stories. Root canals have gotten a bad rap."

But these doctors specialize in root canals and say the procedure is now almost painless.

"The old therapy used anesthetic that would not reach such a high level of anesthesia so patients would feel some of the treatment," Dr. Brad Newberry says.

New technology like computer imagery means that root canals can be performed in just one office visit and not three or four like in the past.

"We also use a microscope that magnifies the tooth 32 times," Dr. Newberry says.

And the hand file that used to cause so much pain has been replaced by the faster electric rotary file to cut down on time.

"We use more flexible instruments," Dr. Newberry says. "That takes away less tooth structure so you're able to keep the tooth longer."

As the anesthesia wears off, Stowell says he felt only mild discomfort.

"Like if you get it cleaned, or just a filling," he describes.

But the pain was nothing like the horror stories he grew up with.

"Not at all," he says. "I was very anxious when I came in. I'm very relieved. I was too worried."

Stowell says it hurt a little bit when the doctor numbed his mouth. But afterward, he told us if he hadn't been so nervous, he probably wouldn't have felt a thing.

There are other doctors who specialize in doing root canals called endodontists. According to the American Association of Endodontists, there are only five clinics in the Ozarks that specialize in root canals.

Video available at: <http://ozarksfirst.com/content/fulltext/?cid=39321>