

## Pulpotomy of Primary Teeth

A deep cavity in your child's baby tooth may extend into the nerve ("pulp") of the tooth. In such cases, a pulpotomy, or "baby root canal," is recommended to save the tooth. A pulpotomy of a baby tooth is similar to, but not as complex as, a root canal treatment on an adult tooth. Both procedures aim to prevent unnecessary tooth loss. Because your child's baby teeth are important in guiding the permanent teeth into position, it is best to try to maintain them in your child's mouth until they are lost naturally. Since the success of pulpotomy treatment is high, the American Dental Association recommends pulpotomies over extractions. Maintaining the tooth in the mouth helps your child to eat and also minimizes the chances of developing a malocclusion.



A pulpotomy removes part of the nerve (pulp) of a tooth. This decreases the chance of the formation of an abscess (i.e., infection.) A medicated filling material is placed in the nerve space. Most often, removal of the infected nerve leaves the tooth in a weakened condition. In order to strengthen the tooth and insure success of the nerve treatment, a stainless steel crown, or "cap," is then fit onto the tooth. The crown will come out on its own when the primary tooth to which it is attached is naturally lost. Your child should avoid eating sticky foods, such as candy and gum, as they will have a tendency to loosen the crown and cause it to come off or leak.

Ninety percent of pulpotomies are successful. However, 10% of teeth treated with pulpotomies and stainless steel caps still abscess. While many parents choose (for esthetic reasons) to have pulpotomy-treated teeth restored with a tooth-colored "composite" filling material rather than a stainless steel cap, the likelihood of an abscess developing becomes greater. If the tooth abscesses, it must be extracted and a space maintainer placed to maintain the space for the permanent tooth that will eventually replace it. Proper brushing and flossing will greatly minimize the chance of abscess formation. Since a tooth may abscess with or without pain, it is recommended that regular six-month checkups be made in order to keep the tooth under observation.

### General Information

1. If local anesthetic was given to your child for the pulpotomy, watch him/her for several hours to make sure he/she is not chewing his/her cheek, tongue, or lip while they are numb.
2. Your child's gums may be slightly sensitive afterwards. Brush and floss as usual after the procedure. Remember, a clean mouth heals faster!
3. Avoid hard and sticky foods that would tend to remove the crown.

PLEASE NOTIFY US if your child continues to complain of discomfort after 24 hours.