

## Something For Seniors To Smile About

A generation ago, dentures and bridgework were all too common among U.S. seniors. Today, according to a recent report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Americans are [blue water homecare](#) keeping their natural teeth longer. In part, seniors can thank endodontists, the dentists who specialize in performing root canal treatment and saving natural teeth. Endodontists' advanced training and access to cutting-edge technologies allow them to save older teeth that once were considered hopeless. As people age, the canals inside their teeth narrow, making tooth-saving procedures more difficult. Using new technologies, such as ultrasonics and operating microscopes, endodontists can locate even the smallest canals to remove inflamed pulp and nerves, and preserve natural teeth. Digital imaging, which is used in place of traditional X-rays to take pictures of teeth, is another tool that significantly increases endodontists' ability to find the cause of pain in even the narrowest root canal. "Endodontists are accustomed to working within a very small space," says Dr. Marc Balson, D.D.S., president of the American Association of Endodontists. "Our background, which includes four years of dental school followed by two to three years of advanced training, allows us to perform root canal treatment efficiently on any patient."



During root canal treatment, the endodontist removes the inflamed or infected pulp (the soft tissue inside teeth), carefully cleans and shapes the inside of the canal (a channel inside the root), then fills and seals the space. A well done root canal is like a solid foundation in a house -it allows for further restorative work to be done on a tooth with a likelihood of long-term health and stability. Endodontists' training also helps them deal with seniors' special medical needs. The same prescription medications that allow older Americans to lead healthier, more active lives can pose problems when it comes time to undergo dental procedures. Endodontists routinely conduct a thorough assessment of elderly patients' medical histories in preparation for root canal treatment, so as to avoid harmful drug interactions and safely treat patients with high blood pressure and other chronic conditions. The most important advantage endodontists offer older patients is experience. On average, endodontists perform 25 root canal treatments each week, while general dentists perform two. This means that seeing an endodontist for root canal treatment is the healthiest way for seniors to avoid dentures, bridgework or artificial implants, and preserve their smiles for a lifetime.