

DES MOINES + HEALTHCARE PROFILES

The Root of the Matter

At Endodontics, P.C., it's all about saving teeth—and relieving pain.

What is an endodontist, anyway?

Dr. Jeffrey Lilly, President of Endodontics, P.C. in West Des Moines, Iowa, has heard this question before. "Many people don't even know what an endodontist is or why they should consider seeing one when needing a root canal. Endodontists have undergone a full two to three years of additional training after graduating from dental school. This training is what makes us specialists in saving teeth."

Founded in 1974, Endodontics, P.C. is today one of the premier, multispecialist endodontics offices in the Midwest. Dr. Lilly, who joined the practice in 1998, works alongside four other endodontists, each of whom shares his passion for helping patients.

"I am fortunate to work with such a great group of doctors. Our team approach allows us to quickly consult on each other's

cases and also promotes an environment of continuous learning. This attitude, paired with our commitment to leading-edge technology, is how we strive to be the best in our industry."

A Path to Healing

At the center of every tooth is the pulp, a collection of tissue that helps to build the surrounding tooth. Infection of the pulp can be caused by trauma to the tooth, deep decay, cracks and chips, or repeated dental procedures. Symptoms may include swelling, sensitivity to temperature, or pain in the tooth and gums. Dr. Lilly says that about a third of his patients have no symptoms; the infection has instead been discovered by their family dentist. Another third have some pain, and the rest call the office in terrible pain.

"Because we are a group practice, we can see patients who are experiencing significant pain on the same day they call," says Dr. Ben Nashleanas, an endodontist in the practice. "We make every effort to never say no. We want to accommodate same-day emergencies and get people out of pain quickly."

Root canal therapy is a three-step process. A local anesthetic is used to numb the area being treated. The endodontist makes a small opening in the biting surface of the tooth, then uses small cleaning instruments and solutions to remove

A root canal procedure can save your natural teeth and prevent the need for dental implants or bridges.

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There's a long-standing belief that root canals are very painful and require multiple appointments to complete, but that's just not true anymore. When you have the procedure performed by an endodontist, you shouldn't experience any more discomfort than having a cavity filled. Treatment time in our office is often 30 to 45 minutes. Patients tell us all the time how amazed they are at how easy and quick it is. You have to remember that this is what we do—all day, every day.

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—Jeffrey Lilly, DDS, MS
President, Endodontics, P.C.

bacteria and infected tissue. The inside of the tooth is filled to keep bacteria out, and the tooth surface is closed.

The specialists at Endodontics, P.C. can also perform surgical procedures in cases of complicated dental trauma or persistent infection. An apicoectomy, in which the tip of the infected tooth's root is surgically removed, may save a tooth that would otherwise need to be extracted.

"Everything my colleagues and I do is to avoid extraction and preserve a patient's natural tooth," says Dr. Lilly. "We're here to help."

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(l-r) Dr. Ben Nashleanas, Dr. Lindsey Meder, Dr. Gary Matt, Dr. Tom Becker, Dr. Jeff Lilly



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