

# EXTERNAL ROOT RESORPTION

External root resorption results when the body's own cells attack the outside of a tooth causing it to break down. It occurs below the enamel on the root surface of the tooth where the gum is attached.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What can cause external root resorption?

- A history of trauma to the tooth or jaws.
- Previous orthodontic treatment.
- Gum surgery, resulting in exposure of the root of the tooth.
- Chemicals used inside the tooth to bleach a discoloured root canal treated tooth.
- Sometimes there is no known cause.

### 2. How is external root resorption diagnosed?

- In the early stages it is not easily detectable, but is usually discovered during a review of x-rays or during a routine dental examination.
- As it becomes more extensive it may cause a pinkish discoloration of the tooth near the gums.
- Due to a lack of symptoms most patients are unaware of any problems.

### 3. Why should I be concerned about external root resorption?

- It can lead to the loss of a significant amount of tooth structure making it easier to fracture.
- As there are often no symptoms the extent of the damage may be quite severe before being diagnosed.

### 4. What is the treatment for external root resorption?

- In the early stages if the resorption is just under the gum-line the gums can be surgically pulled back to expose the damaged tooth structure and repair it with a filling material.
- In later stages as more tooth structure is lost root canal treatment may be necessary.
- If the damage is severe the tooth may require extraction.
- The resorption process may not necessarily get worse and the lesion may go through a reparative phase. Provided there are no symptoms, careful monitoring of the tooth will allow your dentist to suggest the best choice of treatment.

### 5. What may happen if I choose to monitor and not treat my external root resorption?

- The damage to the tooth may remain minimal but long term is unlikely.
- If more tooth structure is lost the likelihood of the tooth fracturing increases resulting in its possible extraction.

