

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.



X-ray of resorption



Normal appearance of tooth



Surgical exposure shows resorption