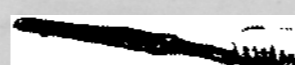




## Tooth Talk

by Linda Kreutzer, Dental Hygienist



### What is a Root Canal?

Has your dentist ever told you that you need a root canal? Did the words strike fear in your heart before you began to understand what a root canal was all about? They really aren't that bad; it's best not to listen to other people's dental horror stories.

A root canal is a wonderful way to keep a tooth that would otherwise be pulled out. It's a way to save a valuable and useful tooth, keeping it in the mouth for years to come.

Root canal therapy is the process of removing all of the inside (pulp) in the roots of the tooth, then filling the roots. Teeth often become decayed or broken so badly that the inside of the tooth becomes infected or abscessed. The tooth is dying and cannot be fixed with a filling anymore.

First, the dentist numbs the area (just like for a filling). A small opening is made on the top part of the tooth. Then, using special small instruments, the unhealthy remains of the tooth's roots are removed, and the remaining canals are cleaned out and medicated. This process gets all the germs that are causing the infection out of the tooth. (Remember, the tooth is numb and you cannot feel this). This process may take one to three visits.

The tooth is still there, but part of the inside is not. Now the tooth needs time to heal before a permanent filling can be done. A special medication is placed in the tooth and then it is sealed with a temporary filling (usually white in color).

The roots cannot be left hollow for long, and your dentist will tell you when to come back to finish your root canal. Two or three weeks is the usual waiting time. It's **very important** to get back to your dentist to finish the root canal. Failure to do this usually results in losing the tooth.

When it's time to finish the root canal, the dentist most likely will numb the tooth again. The roots are re-cleaned and filled. In the final step, a gold or porcelain crown is usually placed over the tooth to keep it strong.

All of this may sound complicated, but if it can save a tooth, go for it! When a tooth is lost, all of the teeth can shift, causing unsightly spacing or even gum problems. Better yet, talk to someone who has lost most of his or her teeth. They just may tell you to do all you can to hold on to every precious one.



Above: Casey Bolan becomes "Casey the Crayon" on Halloween. Below left: Diane Tripp (l) and Linda Kreutzer live up the dental area.



## Halloween at the Siletz Clinic

by Kathryn Dick

Halloween at the Siletz Clinic was a very eventful day. The Head Start classes toured the clinic and received many treats. Some clinic employees also took part by dressing in costumes for the occasion.

Greeting the Head Start children and parents were Lisa Taylor, RNP, who came as a black cat; Casey Bolan, receptionist, a green color crayon; and Brenda Robertson, who was quite the character. I guess they let just about anyone in the lab these days!

And, boy! I'm glad I didn't have a dental appointment this day! Linda Kreutzer and Diane Tripp, the new dental assistant, were quite scary looking. I myself was happy just being me, taking pictures and passing out candy. It was a very fun day!