



Vital Pulp Therapy (VPT)

What is the pulp?

The center of the tooth is the pulp canal. This canal houses the tooth's pulp tissue which is made up of blood vessels and nerves. Pulpitis is inflammation of the pulp.

What is a vital pulpotomy?

Vital pulpotomy is partial removal of the living interior of the tooth (the pulp). After pulpotomy, layers of dental materials are placed on top of the remaining pulp to sterilize and seal it from the environment. The remaining hole in the tooth is then filled in a similar manner to filling a cavity. The whole procedure is called Vital Pulp Therapy.

What is the goal of vital pulp therapy?

The goal is to treat a tooth that has had exposure of the pulp, either from trauma or from intentional shortening, and keep the tooth alive. It is an alternative treatment to extraction, which would remove the tooth and all its functionality, and to root canal therapy. A root canal procedure removes all the living material from the tooth. With VPT the tooth continues to age and develop normally.

When is vital pulp therapy indicated?

There are two typical situations for VPT:

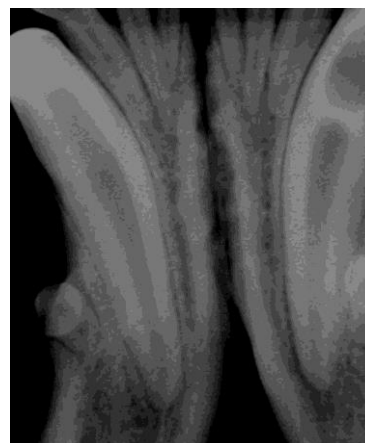
- Fractured teeth with pulp exposure of less than 72 hours. The sooner the tooth is treated the greater the chance of success.
- Young dogs with an abnormal bite such that the lower fangs are piercing the palate or upper gums. The teeth are shortened and VPT is performed.



This lower left fang is traumatizing the upper gums. The tooth can be shortened and treated with vital pulp therapy as in the photo above.

What long term care is required?

Home care with daily teeth brushing is recommended. Chewing on hard toys, bones or materials, playing tug of war games and any activity that can compromise the tooth must be avoided. The composite can chip which would expose the pulp to contamination. While vital pulpotomy has very high rate of success, it is still one of the most sensitive procedures we perform. Therefore, following up with dental x-rays in 6 to 9 months and annually for up to 5 years is essential to confirm the continued health of the tooth. If the tooth becomes infected, root canal therapy can be performed in the future.



Dental bridge of reparative dentin.

Remember:

- Pulp capping and vital pulpotomy saves the function and vitality of a tooth
 - Daily home care is recommended following the procedure
- Annual radiographs of the treated tooth are used to confirm continued vitality