



Vital Pulp Therapy

When a tooth breaks, and the pulp of the tooth is exposed, treatment must be performed or the tooth will die, and become a source of chronic pain and infection for the pet. Typically, treatment is either *root canal therapy* or *extraction*.

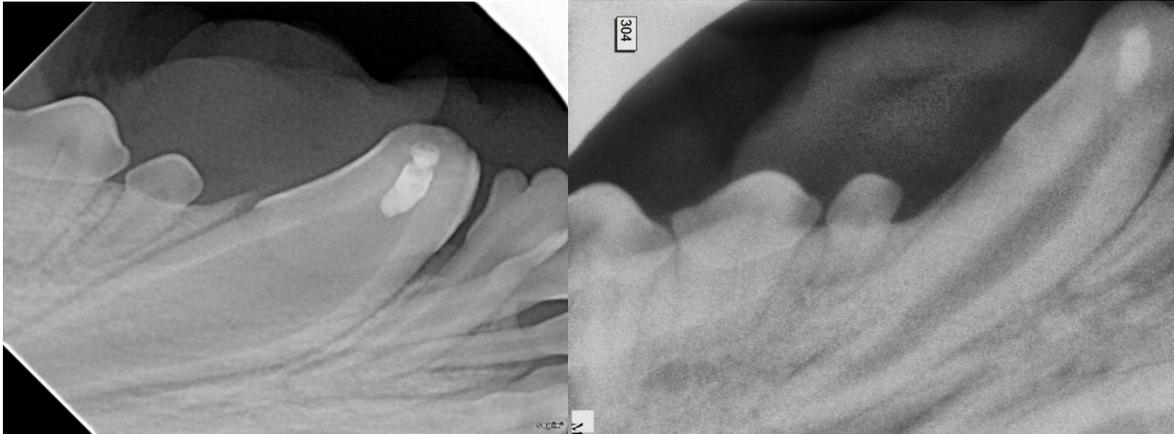
If a tooth has been recently broken, and we can see you pet within 48 hours of the tooth breaking, a third option may be to perform endodontic therapy to keep the tooth vital. This is called Vital Pulp Therapy, or Partial coronal pulpectomy. There may be some pets where we recommend a procedure to remove part of the crown of a tooth, and in doing so expose the pulp of the tooth. This is another situation in which vital pulp therapy can be used.

Vital Pulp therapy involves a specialized procedure to remove the inflamed portion of the pulp. After part of the pulp is removed, a medical dressing is placed on the pulp to encourage it to heal. Then a restoration is used to seal the pulp of the tooth. This composite material closely matches the color of the tooth and allows it to continue to function as a normal tooth. During this procedure, several dental x-rays are taken to make sure the procedure has been done correctly, and for us to be able to tell if the procedure was successful.



Preop and Postop Pictures of an upper 4th premolar treated with Vital Pulp Therapy.

Vital Pulp Therapy requires follow-up x-rays to be taken in 3-6 months after treatment, and then yearly afterward. This is due to the fact that the pulp tissue of a tooth is very delicate, and even with the best care, vital pulp therapy can fail, resulting in tooth root infection. Since our pets are skilled at hiding signs of pain, follow-up x-rays allow us to tell whether our treatment has been successful or whether further treatment is indicated.



These x-rays are of the same tooth 1.5 years apart, showing what a successful Vital Pulp therapy should look like at the recheck. It is important to recheck these x-rays to make sure the tooth stays vital!