

Silicon Valley Endodontics & Microsurgery

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Save the Tooth or Extract? — A Decision Guide

The real first question isn't "which treatment is better" — it's "is this tooth restorable?" Full guide: svendodontics.com/root-canal-vs-extraction.

THE FIRST QUESTION: IS THE TOOTH RESTORABLE?

A crown needs roughly 1.5–2 mm of sound tooth all the way around above the bone (the “ferrule” rule) to hold long-term. If that structure is there, the tooth is restorable — and a root canal usually wins on cost, longevity, and biology. If it isn't, even a perfect root canal fails at the restoration in 2–5 years, and extraction was the right call from the start.

SIDE BY SIDE: ROOT CANAL + CROWN vs EXTRACTION + IMPLANT

- Cost (Bay Area, 2026): root canal + crown \$2,500–\$3,500 · implant + crown \$5,000–\$7,000.
- Success: root canal 86–93% at 5 years (Setzer & Kim, J Endod 2014) · implant ~95% at 10 years — close, so success rate rarely decides it.
- Timeline: root canal 2–4 weeks · implant 4–6 months (longer if a bone graft is needed).
- Biology & feel: your natural tooth keeps its periodontal ligament — pressure sensing and shock absorption an implant cannot replicate. Implants fuse directly to bone.
- Extraction alone (\$200–\$400) is cheapest up front — but the neighboring teeth drift, the bone resorbs, and the replacement cost arrives later.

WHEN EXTRACTION IS HONESTLY THE BETTER CHOICE

- Vertical root fracture — the crack runs lengthwise through the root; cleaning the canal cannot repair it.
 - Not enough sound tooth structure left for a crown to seal long-term (the ferrule problem).
 - Severe periodontal bone loss — no stable foundation even if the root canal succeeds.
 - Unfavorable crown-to-root ratio, or a tooth with low strategic value in the arch.
- A specialist should tell you this honestly — even when it means losing the root canal fee.

The second-opinion rule

If a dentist who is not an endodontic specialist recommends extraction, get a second opinion before the tooth comes out — extraction is irreversible. About one in eight patients arriving at our office for a second opinion leave with a different recommendation than they came in with. A 20-minute consult plus a CBCT 3D scan often saves the tooth.

Not sure? Bring us the x-ray — we'll give you a straight answer.

(669) 234-2354 — answered seven days a week, with weekend hours Saturday and Sunday 8 AM–3 PM.

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Consistent with the American Association of Endodontists (AAE) Treatment Options for the Compromised Tooth framework and published outcome literature (Setzer & Kim, Journal of Endodontics 2014). Full sources: svendodontics.com/root-canal-vs-extraction. General guidance only — your own prognosis depends on case-specific factors evaluated at consultation.