



Dear Patient,

RE: Dr. Scott Waghorn Large or Deep Restoration Advice

Congratulations on a successful composite restoration procedure completed without immediate complications. This guide outlines what to expect from the immediate post-operative period through to long-term healing and is designed to help you understand what to expect, how to care for the tooth, and when to seek review.

This type of restoration is often required when decay or structural damage has affected a significant portion of the tooth. Although the filling procedure is now complete, the tooth itself—particularly the pulp and surrounding structures—continues to undergo biological changes in the days and weeks following treatment.

Predictive Fields:

- **Predicted sensitivity level:** _____ /10
- **Expected duration of sensitivity:** _____ days
- **Estimated bite strength of filling:** _____ % of full biting force

These values are intended to help guide your expectations during healing. Sensitivity and bite strength vary depending on the depth of the filling, proximity to the nerve, and whether a crack or prior trauma is present.

Physiological Overview of Pulpal Healing

When a deep or extensive filling is placed, your body initiates a complex healing response within the inner tissues of the tooth. The dental pulp, which contains nerves and blood vessels, may become temporarily inflamed due to the proximity of the filling material, heat from drilling, or the removal of bacteria and infected dentine.

In the first 24–48 hours, this mild inflammation may result in sensitivity to temperature changes, pressure, or air. This stage is referred to as **reversible pulpitis**, where the nerve is irritated but still vital and capable of healing. Immune cells work to stabilise the area, reduce inflammation, and re-establish fluid balance within the pulp chamber.

Over the following days, reparative dentine may begin forming along the internal surfaces of the pulp as a biological defence mechanism. As this secondary layer

thickens, it helps insulate the nerve from external stimuli. This process can take **several weeks**, and symptoms typically subside gradually as the pulp recovers and adapts. In a small percentage of cases, however, inflammation may persist or worsen—especially if the pulp has been compromised by previous trauma, cracks, or bacterial invasion. This may lead to **irreversible pulpitis**, requiring root canal treatment to save the tooth.

What to Expect After a Large or Deep Filling

First 24–48 Hours

- **Anaesthetic Effects:** Numbness may last 2–4 hours. Avoid eating or drinking hot substances until full feeling has returned.
 - **Sensitivity:** It is common for the tooth to be sensitive to **cold, heat, pressure, or air**. The sensation may be sharp, electrical, or achy.
 - **Bite Awareness:** The bite may feel slightly high or unfamiliar. This is not unusual, but if it persists for more than 3–4 days or causes discomfort, contact us to arrange a quick adjustment.
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Understanding Sensitivity and Pulpal Response

A deep filling comes close to the nerve (pulp) of the tooth. The nerve may become mildly inflamed in response to treatment. Most often, this inflammation settles over 1–4 weeks, but in some cases, the nerve may not recover fully.

- **Mild cold sensitivity** that quickly fades is usually normal.
- **Pain that lingers more than 30 seconds** after cold exposure may be a sign of pulpal stress.
- **Pain that worsens over time**, occurs spontaneously, or wakes you at night may require reassessment.

In a small percentage of cases, the nerve may not survive. If this occurs, **root canal treatment** may be necessary. Please email us promptly if your symptoms worsen.

Why the Tooth May Still Feel Weak

A large filling replaces lost tooth structure, but it cannot fully replicate the strength of natural enamel and dentine. Even after treatment, the tooth may:

- Feel tender when biting or chewing
- Be at risk of cracking or fracture under excessive load
- Flex slightly, triggering cold or pressure sensitivity

To protect the tooth, **avoid chewing hard or sticky foods** on the filled side for at least three days. In some cases, additional restoration (e.g. a crown or onlay) may be advised to prevent future breakage.

Cracked Tooth Syndrome (CTS)

If you feel a **sharp pain when biting down or releasing pressure**, this may indicate a crack in the tooth. These cracks can be microscopic and are not always visible on X-rays.

Cracked Tooth Syndrome often presents in teeth with large existing fillings or a history of clenching/grinding. If symptoms persist, we may recommend:

- Bite adjustments
- Occlusal splint therapy
- Crown placement to stabilise the crack

Please let us know if these symptoms develop.

Future Treatment Considerations

This filling has restored your tooth for the time being, but depending on its depth, location, and remaining structure, **a crown or onlay may be recommended** in the future to provide long-term strength and protection.

If you are interested in exploring this option, we can arrange a quote and timeline tailored to your situation.

Home Care Instructions – Dr Scott Waghorn preferred technique

These oral hygiene instructions are based on over two decades of clinical experience and collaboration with specialist periodontists. They are designed to help you maintain excellent gum and tooth health after dental treatment.

Brushing – Twice Daily (Morning and Night)

- Use an **electric toothbrush** – Dr Scott recommends the **Oral-B** range.
- Any model from \$40 to \$450 is acceptable unless a specific recommendation has been given.
- Begin on the cheek (buccal) side of the upper back teeth. Brush up and down the tooth 6 times, extending 2 mm into the gum moving slowly. Go tooth by tooth until you reach the other side.
- Then switch to the inside (palatal) upper surfaces. Brush in groups of 2–3 teeth, scrubbing back and forth 6 times per group.
- Repeat the entire process for the lower teeth.
- This should take approximately 90 seconds per arch (3 minutes total).

Bleeding gums are common when you first adopt this level of thoroughness. This is a sign of gingivitis or early gum disease and will usually resolve within 1–2 weeks of consistent brushing.

Signs of improvement include:

- Gums turning from red to light pink
- Reduced swelling and tenderness
- Minimal or no bleeding

If bleeding persists beyond 2–3 weeks, please contact the practice or book with one of our dental hygienists.

Flossing – Once Daily (Preferably at Night)

- Use approximately 30 cm of floss, wrapped around your middle fingers.
- Use thumbs and forefingers to guide the floss gently between each tooth.
- At each contact point, pass the floss in and out 3 times.
- Continue around the entire mouth.

If you have larger spaces between your teeth, interproximal brushes ("mini bottle brushes") may be more effective. Water flossers and alcohol-free mouthwash can also assist in maintaining gum and interdental health.

Ongoing Dental Maintenance

Unless otherwise advised, Dr Scott recommends the following routine:

- **Annual check-up and X-rays** – to assess fillings, cracks, and decay between teeth.
- **Six-monthly hygiene appointments** – to control tartar, manage gum health, and receive personalised oral care advice.

This preventative approach helps ensure long-term stability of your dental work and reduces your risk of needing more complex treatment in future.

Healing Timeline Overview

Timeframe Expected Symptoms and Advice

Day 1–2 Mild cold sensitivity or pressure discomfort. Avoid hard foods.

Day 3–7 Gradual improvement. Continue to monitor the bite and sensitivity.

Week 2–3 Symptoms should reduce noticeably.

Week 4–6 Most sensitivity should be resolved. Contact us if symptoms persist.

When to Email for Review

Please email **scott@northshoredental.co.nz** if you notice any of the following:

- Pain worsening over time or waking you at night
- Prolonged cold sensitivity (>30 seconds)
- New swelling or a sensation of pressure inside the tooth
- A “high” or uneven bite that does not settle
- Sharp pain on biting or release of pressure

We are here to ensure your recovery is smooth and successful.

Best regards,



Dr. Scott Waghorn BDS (Otago)