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# WISDOM TEETH ADVICE FOR PATIENTS



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# REMOVING WISDOM TEETH

This information is for patients who may need to have an operation to remove their impacted wisdom teeth. It explains why they may need to be removed, what is involved and any risks or complications there may be.

## THE WISDOM TEETH

Wisdom teeth can erupt anytime from around 15 years onwards. Some people do not have wisdom teeth at all, or some can lay buried under the gum and can remain there untouched.

## IMPACTED WISDOM TEETH

If the jaws are too small to accommodate all the teeth, there may not be enough space for the wisdom teeth to come through properly and they become impacted (stuck), often causing problems.

## REASONS FOR THE REMOVAL OF WISDOM TEETH

- The most common reason is a recurrent infection of the gum overlying a tooth that is part way through the gum (pericoronitis).
- Decay (caries) in the wisdom tooth which your dentist cannot restore.
- Infection of the tooth (abscess) due to advance dental decay.
- When the adjacent molar tooth is affected by gum (periodontal) disease or dental decay due to the impacted wisdom tooth.
- Progressive cystic (fluid filled sack) formation around the tooth.
- As part of other surgical procedures involving the jaw.
- There may be other less common reason that your surgeon will discuss with you.

## REMOVAL OF THE WISDOM TEETH

There is great variation in the difficulty of removing wisdom teeth.

- The procedure can be carried out under local anaesthesia (injection in the gum to numb the area), with or without intravenous sedation (injection in the arm or hand to reduce anxiety), or under general anaesthetic (completely asleep in hospital).
- Your surgeon will discuss with you which method is most appropriate.
- The degree of difficulty of surgery, any underlying medical conditions and other personal circumstances are taken into account when choosing the method.
- The procedure can involve an incision in the gum close to the tooth.
- Sometimes some jaw bone around the tooth is removed with a drill and the procedure can be made easier by sectioning the tooth itself into smaller pieces.

## WHAT CAN BE EXPECTED AFTER THE OPERATION?

- There is a great variation in the pain and discomfort suffered by individuals and this also depends on how difficult the surgery is. The average recovery time is between 5-7 days.
- Swelling is common and tends to be maximum on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> day after surgery, reducing over about a week.
- Mouth opening is likely to be restricted and a semi-solid diet will be required over the first few days.
- Expect some pain from the operation site, which should be helped by painkillers.
- Bruising of the face and upper neck occasionally occurs.

## SOME POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Removal of wisdom teeth is a very safe and common procedure but there is some risk associated:

- Most bleeding will have stopped shortly (within ½ hour) of the operation finishing. Blood stained saliva may be noticed for a day or 2. More persistent bleeding may occur which should be dealt with by your surgeon/hospital.
- Some antibiotics are prescribed after the operation. Even so, infection of a tooth socket occasionally occurs.
- When an adjacent tooth has a large filling or crown it is possible that this can be dislodged during surgery.
- The nerves which give sensation to the lower lip, chin and tongue are very close to the lower wisdom teeth and can be prone to bruising.
- If this happens numbness or a tingling sensation in the lip and chin or tongue will be experienced. This is temporary in most cases, but in a small number of cases recovery may not be complete. Very rarely continued pain may be felt from damaged nerves.

Please speak to your surgeon before your operation if you have any concerns about these risks.

