

## Wisdom Teeth

About two thirds of the population have wisdom teeth. Usually these teeth come through around the age of 17-25 but often they come through later or not at all.

Not everyone has problems with their wisdom teeth. In most cases the teeth erupt in the same way as the other molar teeth. There is usually some temporary discomfort as the teeth come through which stops once fully in position.

Sometimes there is not enough room for wisdom teeth to come through. The teeth come partly through and then become stuck (impacted) against the tooth in front.



### Problems with wisdom teeth

#### Gum Infection (pericoronitis)

When a wisdom tooth is impacted and partly erupted it is difficult to keep clean. The food debris and bacteria may cause an infection called pericoronitis. This infection can be mild and it can be severe.

### Symptoms of Pericoronitis:

- Sore/tender gum
- Bad taste
- Pain
- Swelling (of gums/face)
- Difficulty opening mouth
- Fever

#### Dental Decay (Caries)

Wisdom teeth like all other teeth can become decayed (caries). Commonly this is due to eating a high sugar diet and inadequate cleaning.

The tooth in front of an impacted wisdom tooth often becomes decayed as well, as the area between these teeth is difficult to clean.

#### Keeping Your Wisdom Teeth Clean

After brushing your teeth thoroughly for 3 minutes a small brush such as an interspace brush can be used to clean beneath the flap of gum over a wisdom tooth. Dental floss should be used to clean between the wisdom tooth and adjacent tooth.



### Management of Pericoronitis

If you notice the gum around the wisdom tooth beginning to swell or becomes sore you should rinse with some chlorhexidine antibacterial rinse such as Corsodyl twice daily for a week.



A mild infection may go away by itself by doing this and by cleaning the tooth thoroughly. You can rinse with hot salt water to relieve the discomfort, and if needed take over the counter painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen for a short period.

If the discomfort does not improve or you are having difficulty opening your mouth or your face is swollen you should see a dentist.

The dentist may clean thoroughly around the tooth and may prescribe antibiotics.

#### Removal Of wisdom teeth

Wisdom teeth do not always need removing. Pain free healthy teeth should be checked by your dentist at regular intervals. Your dentist may recommend extraction of your wisdom teeth if you have suffered repeated or severe infections or if the tooth is decayed.

Removal of upper wisdom is usually easy and impacted lower teeth more difficult. The difficulty depends on the position of the tooth. Your dentist will assess this using an x-ray.



Your dentist may refer you to an oral surgeon for the extraction.

Usually the extractions are carried out with a local anaesthetic but sometimes sedation or a general anaesthetic is required for particularly difficult or multiple extractions.

#### **Afterwards**

Following extraction of a wisdom tooth you can expect to have some discomfort and swelling, sometimes making it difficult to open your mouth wide and you should follow the instructions given to you by your dentist/oral surgeon.

Very occasionally there may be some damage to the nerve to your lower lip, which can cause tingling, or numbness. There is a higher risk of this with some teeth depending on their position, your dentist will discuss this with you prior to the extraction.

#### **Further Information**

If you have any questions about the information on this leaflet please ask your dentist.

British Dental Health Foundation:  
Wisdom teeth

<http://www.dentalhealth.org.uk/faqs/leafletdetail.php?LeafletID=43>

NHS Direct: Wisdom Tooth Removal

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Wisdom-tooth-removal/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE):

Guidance regarding wisdom tooth removal  
<http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/TA1>

Denplan: Oral Health Care Tips

<http://www.denplan.co.uk/patients/oral-healthcare-tips.aspx>

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