

Removing Wisdom Teeth

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This fact sheet is for general information about this procedure only. It is not intended to be used as medical advice or to replace advice that your relevant healthcare professional would give you. If you have a particular medical problem, please consult a healthcare professional.

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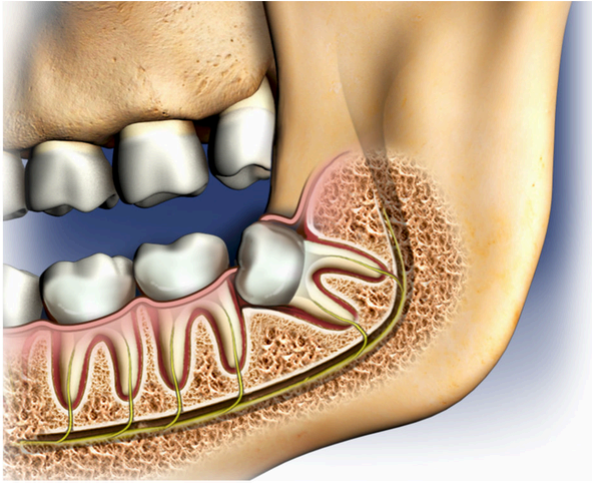
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What are wisdom teeth?

Wisdom teeth are at the back of your mouth. They normally come through (erupt) in your late teens or early twenties.

An impacted lower wisdom tooth



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Are there any alternatives?

Simple painkillers like paracetamol and ibuprofen can help control mild pain.

Antibiotics and rinsing with warm, salty water or chlorhexidine mouthwash can help if the area around the wisdom tooth is infected.

There are surgical alternatives to removing wisdom teeth. These are:

- Operculectomy. This involves removing the gum lying over your tooth.
- Coronectomy. This involves removing just the crown of your tooth.

What will happen if I decide not to have the procedure or it is delayed?

Your symptoms may get worse or come back. You may be at risk of getting a serious, life-threatening infection.

If you need to have your wisdom tooth removed before you can have corrective surgery or other orthodontic treatment, that surgery or treatment may not be possible.

What does the procedure involve?

The procedure usually takes 10 minutes to an hour, depending on how many wisdom teeth need to be removed and how difficult they are to remove.

The procedure may involve a cut in the gum close to the tooth. In some cases, your dentist or surgeon will take some bone around the tooth away with a drill. The tooth may be cut into smaller pieces. This makes removing the tooth and root easier.

Most upper wisdom teeth can be removed easily under a local anaesthetic.

Lower wisdom teeth can be more difficult to remove. However, most lower wisdom teeth can also be removed under local anaesthetic.

If the procedure is likely to be difficult, your surgeon may offer you a sedative.

If you smoke, stopping smoking now may reduce your risk of developing complications and will improve your long-term health. Stopping smoking and keeping your mouth clean significantly reduces the risk of infection in a wisdom-tooth socket.

Try to maintain a healthy weight. You have a higher risk of developing complications if you are overweight.

Regular exercise should help to prepare you for the operation, help you to recover and improve your long-term health. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Speak to the healthcare team about any vaccinations you might need to reduce your risk of serious illness while you recover. When you come into hospital, practise hand washing and wear a face covering when asked.

What complications can happen?

General complications of any procedure

- Bleeding.
- Swelling. This is common and is usually worst 2 to 3 days after the procedure. It should settle within a week.
- Allergic reaction to the equipment, materials or medication.
- Chest infection.

- Infection. You may have a high temperature, feel unwell and the area under your jawline may feel tender.

Specific complications of this procedure

- Bruising. This should clear up within 2 weeks.
- Dry socket, where the socket does not heal well.
- Not being able to open your mouth fully and jaw stiffness.
- Retained roots, where it is not possible to remove the whole tooth, or your surgeon decides it is safer to leave a root fragment in place.
- Damage to nearby teeth. Sometimes nearby teeth can be loosened.
- Damage to nerves that connect to your lip and tongue, if you have a lower wisdom tooth removed. This can lead to loss of feeling in your lip, chin or tongue and a change or loss of taste. Any damage is usually temporary.
- Sinus problems. Sometimes a tooth or a fragment of tooth may move into a sinus. You will need surgery to remove the piece of tooth.
- Breaking the bone (tuberosity) behind the wisdom tooth. This can cause bleeding and may cause an opening between the sinus and your mouth. This complication is rare, but if it happens you may need another procedure to fix it.
- Broken jaw. This is rare. The risk is higher if the procedure was difficult for your dentist to perform.
- Osteonecrosis, a rare condition where tissue in your jawbone starts to die preventing your tooth socket from healing properly.

Consequences of this procedure

- Pain.

What happens after the procedure?

You should be able to go home the same day.

If your wound starts to bleed, bite for 20 minutes on a pack made of gauze, or on a clean handkerchief rolled into a small knot.

Eat only soft foods for 1 to 2 days, gradually moving on to solid food only when you can chew comfortably.

You may need to take up to a week off work. You should be able to return to normal activities within a week.

Most people make a full recovery without any follow-up.

Summary

Wisdom teeth can sometimes cause serious problems. Surgery is usually a safe and effective way to stop your symptoms from coming back.

Keep this information document. Use it to help you if you need to talk to the healthcare team.

Some information, such as risk and complication statistics, is taken from global studies and/or databases. Please ask your surgeon or doctor for more information about the risks that are specific to you, and they may be able to tell you about any other suitable treatments options.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant healthcare team would give you.

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