

Wisdom teeth general information

What are wisdom teeth?

Wisdom teeth are the last of the molar teeth to develop (erupt) into an adult mouth. They usually develop around the age of 18 to 25 years. Commonly there is insufficient space for the wisdom teeth to come into the mouth fully and they can become impacted. Impacted wisdom teeth are prone to infection and can create other difficulties in cleaning.

Why do wisdom teeth need to be taken out?

In the majority of cases it is because wisdom teeth are prone to repeated infections. Sometimes food can get lodged around an impacted wisdom tooth or it may be impossible to clean properly around it leading to tooth decay or gum disease. Your dentist will advise as to the specific reasons in your case.

Who has problems with wisdom teeth?

Commonly people in their teens and their 20s can have problems although problems can occur at any age.

What are the symptoms?

Common symptoms include soreness, swelling, an unpleasant taste and sometimes stiffness of the jaw which can make it difficult to open your mouth fully. Not all wisdom teeth need to be extracted. Your dentist will advise you of any alternative treatments.

What happens after wisdom teeth are removed?

Complications can occur as with any extraction or minor surgery in your mouth. This may involve discomfort or swelling for the first few days after an extraction. The more difficult a tooth is to remove, the more likely there is to be discomfort or swelling.

There can also be some bruising. As with all surgery it is possible to get an infection after surgery and if you have a raised temperature, severe pain that cannot be relieved by taking pain killers or an increased swelling you should contact your dental surgery. It is not always possible to predict how you will react to minor surgery, however, if you have any concerns please make sure that you discuss these with your dentist.

What are the risks of having a wisdom tooth out?

Other than the normal risks of having minor surgery or an extraction there are some specific risks that may occur.

Upper wisdom teeth:

The roots of the upper wisdom teeth may be close to the sinuses. After these teeth are removed there could be an opening between the sinus and the mouth. It is important to follow your dentist's instructions particularly if advised not to blow your nose for a period of time after the extraction.

Lower Wisdom teeth:

The lower wisdom teeth may be situated very close to the nerves in the lower jaw. Your dentist will advise you as to the specific risk of nerve injury which, if it occurs, can result in numbness or tingling to the tongue, lip and chin area. Sometimes taste can also be disturbed.

Whilst it is not always possible to predict whether these risks will occur, your dentist is likely to take x-rays of the teeth which can help predict whether your wisdom teeth are close to the nerves and also whether an injury is likely to occur. Please ensure that you have discussed this with your dentist before you make a decision to have your wisdom tooth extracted.

Do not hesitate to ask us if you have any further queries.



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