

Information sheet for removal of wisdom teeth

Wisdom teeth

Wisdom teeth are the third molars at the back of the mouth. They usually emerge in your late teens. Sometimes there is not enough room for wisdom teeth in the mouth, and they can become impacted into the jaw bone or into the tooth in front.

Reasons for removal of wisdom teeth

- Repeated infections (pericoronitis), causing pain and swelling
- Food packing, causing decay in the wisdom tooth itself or the adjacent tooth.
- Other pathology including gum disease and cyst formation.

The procedure

Local anaesthetic injections are given, to numb the whole area. The surgery depends on the positioning of the tooth. Where necessary the gum is cut to reach the wisdom tooth especially if it is partially buried. In some cases it may be necessary to remove a small amount of bone, or divide the tooth. After the extraction stitches may be placed which take between 1-3 weeks to dissolve.

After the extraction

The post operative discomfort will depend on the procedure. You may experience some pain and swelling for a few days after the procedure and bruising may occur. Painkillers are recommended and occasionally you will be prescribed antibiotics. It is possible that you may experience a stiff jaw for a few days.

Possible risks

Possible risks include:

- Pain which can be controlled with painkillers
- Swelling or bruising
- Stiffness of the jaw
- Bleeding of the gum, this will normally be stopped by applying pressure
- Damage to the surrounding teeth during the procedure, but this is rare

Infection is rare, but occasionally a dry socket can occur, which is when the blood clot is lost leaving exposed painful bone. This will need to be cleaned and dressed by your dental surgeon. For this reason it is especially important to avoid smoking during the healing period.

Two nerves lie close to the lower wisdom teeth and occasionally these nerves can be stretched or bruised which can cause tingling or numbness or altered sensation to your lip, chin and tongue, and rarely can alter taste sensation. The risk of temporary numbness is about 5% and permanent numbness <1%, although this is very slightly higher if the tooth is in a difficult position. The surgeon will discuss this with you.

When extracting upper teeth there is a small risk that a hole can develop between your mouth and air sinus. Most of these heal on their own but very occasionally you may need a second procedure to close the gap.

After surgery:

- Rest for a few hours and avoid strenuous exercise
- Take over the counter painkillers
- Brush the rest of your teeth normally
- Use hot salt water mouth rinses the day after surgery, this helps the healing process
- Avoid smoking, as this can delay the healing process and make you more prone to infections

If you have any problems, please contact the surgery on 020 8870 5059