

## Maxillofacial Unit

# Removal of Impacted Wisdom Teeth

This leaflet has been designed to improve your understanding of any forthcoming treatment and contains answers to many of the commonly asked questions. If you have any other questions that the leaflet does not answer or would like further explanation please ask.

### The problem

The wisdom tooth (or third molar) is usually the last tooth to erupt into the mouth anytime after about 16 years of age. Frequently there is not enough room to accommodate wisdom teeth and as such they do not come into the mouth normally. When this happens, the wisdom teeth are said to be “impacted”. Wisdom teeth are usually either impacted forwards into the tooth in front or backwards into the jaw bone.

### Why do I need treatment?

An impacted wisdom tooth can cause a number of problems that mean the tooth is best removed.

#### Most commonly these are:

- Repeated attacks of infection in the gum surrounding the tooth. This leads to pain and swelling.
- Food packing which causes decay in either the wisdom tooth or the tooth in front.
- Cysts can form around the wisdom tooth if it does not come into the mouth properly.

A cyst occurs when fluid fills the sack that normally surrounds a developing wisdom tooth.

### What does the treatment involve?

Because the wisdom tooth has not fully erupted into the mouth it is often necessary to make a cut in the gum over the tooth. Sometimes it is also necessary to remove some bone surrounding the crown of the wisdom tooth. Rarely the tooth needs to be cut into 2 or 3 pieces to remove it. Once the wisdom tooth has been removed the gum is put back into place with stitches. In the majority of cases these stitches are dissolvable and take around two weeks to disappear.

## What type of anaesthetic is used?

A number of options are available and depend on how difficult the wisdom tooth is to remove:

- **Local anaesthetic** – this is an injection into gum surrounding the wisdom tooth, rather similar to that you may have had at your dentist for a filling. The injection takes a couple of minutes to numb the area and means that you will feel no pain while the wisdom tooth is removed. This is the best option for wisdom teeth that are simple to remove.
- **Local anaesthetic and intravenous sedation** – in addition to a local anaesthetic injection you can be given an injection into your arm. This makes you feel relaxed and less aware of the procedure.
- **General anaesthetic** – it is usually possible to remove wisdom teeth under a “day case” general anaesthetic, ie although you are put to sleep completely you will be able to go home on the same day as surgery.

## How long does it take to remove a wisdom tooth?

This is a variable. Some wisdom teeth may take only a few minutes to remove. More difficult wisdom teeth that need to be cut into pieces to remove can take around 20 minutes to extract.

## Is there much pain or swelling after the removal of wisdom teeth?

It is likely that there will be some discomfort and swelling both on the inside and outside of your mouth after surgery. This is usually worse for the first three days but it may take up to two weeks before all the soreness goes. You may also find that your jaw is stiff and you may need to eat a soft diet for a week or so. If it is likely to be sore your surgeon will arrange painkillers for you. It may also be necessary for you to have a course of antibiotics after the extraction.

There may be some bruising of the skin on your face that can take up to a fortnight to fade away.

## Is there anything else I need to do after the extractions?

It is important to keep the extraction sites as clean as possible for the first few weeks after surgery. It may be difficult to clean your teeth around the sites of the extraction because it is sore and if this is the case it is best to keep the area free from food debris by gently rinsing with a mouthwash or warm salt water (dissolve a flat teaspoon of kitchen salt in a cup of warm water) commencing on the day after surgery.

## Do I need to take any time off work?

Usually it will be necessary to take a few days off work and avoid strenuous exercise for this time. Depending on the type of anaesthetic used you may well not be able to drive (24 hours after intravenous sedation and for 48 hours after a general anaesthetic).

## What are the possible post surgery problems

### Bleeding

If bleeding occurs, take one of the gauze packs provided, moisten it lightly, place over the socket and bite firmly for at least 15 minutes or until the bleeding stops. The presence of blood staining of your saliva is normal for a few days after surgery. If bleeding persists please contact the department.

## Infection

Infection may occur but is uncommon after surgery. If you smoke this will increase the risk of infection , therefore stopping smoking for a few days to a week after your procedure will aid healing. If you feel the site is infected please contact the Maxillofacial Unit.

## Nerve damage

Wisdom teeth are very close to nerves in the lower jaw. If this gets bruised or damaged during your procedure it can cause numbness, pain or tingling to the tongue, lip and chin area. If this happens, it is usually temporary but each may rarely be permanent.

This leaflet is specific to the practice of Oral and Maxillo-Facial Surgery in the United Kingdom and is in addition to the generic guidance given in the GMC publications of Good Medical and Surgical Practice 2001 & 2002.

**If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :**

Maxillofacial Unit  
Huddersfield Royal Infirmary

Telephone (01484) 342336 / 345486

[www.cht.nhs.uk](http://www.cht.nhs.uk)

**If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.**

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce, obraťte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

Jeżeli są Państwo zainteresowani otrzymaniem tych informacji w innym formacie lub wersji językowej, prosimy skontaktować się z nami, korzystając z ww. danych kontaktowych

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