

University Dental Hospital of Manchester
Department of Oral Surgery

Information for Patients

Wisdom tooth removal/surgery

This leaflet aims to improve your understanding of your upcoming treatment and contains answers to many frequently asked questions. If you have any other questions or would like further explanations, please ask a member of staff.

The wisdom tooth or third molar is usually the last tooth to erupt into the mouth usually between the ages of 18 to 22, although sometimes they appear many years later and may need to be removed for a number of reasons.

Why do I need treatment?

Frequently there is not enough room to accommodate wisdom teeth and as such they do not come into the mouth properly and can get stuck. When this happens wisdom teeth are said to be “impacted”. An impacted wisdom tooth can cause problems and are occasionally removed.

Frequent problems with wisdom teeth are:

- Repeated episodes of inflammation or infection in the gum surrounding the tooth. This leads to pain and swelling and is called pericoronitis.
- Food packing around the impacted wisdom tooth which has led to tooth decay in either the wisdom tooth or the tooth in front.
- A cyst can form around the wisdom tooth if it does not come into the mouth normally. A cyst occurs when fluid fills the lining that normally surrounds a developing wisdom tooth. This is not nasty but it can damage the surrounding bone if left to get bigger over time.
- Wisdom teeth do not cause your front teeth to get crowded (overlapped) so this is not a reason to have your wisdom tooth removed.

What does it involve?

If 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 we remove some bone surrounding the tooth and the tooth may be

separated into pieces to allow it to be removed, this can feel like having a filling. Once the wisdom tooth has been removed the gum is put back into place with stitches, these take about 2 weeks to dissolve and fall out.

What type of anaesthetic is used?

A number of options are available and these will be discussed with you taking into account any underlying medical conditions, personal circumstances and the degree of difficulty of the surgical removal. Each case of removal is different and our surgeon will explain the details to you. The majority of people have this treatment under numbing injections like you would have at the dentist.

What can I expect after the removal of the wisdom tooth?

- There will be some pain and discomfort after your treatment; this can last for up to two weeks. You should have over the counter pain relief medication ready at home to take after your procedure.
- It is likely that there will be swelling both on the inside and outside of your mouth after surgery. This is usually worst for the first five days but it may take up to two weeks to fully resolve. Do not put anything warm on the swelling, this can make it worse.
- You may also find that your jaw is stiff and you may need to eat a soft diet for a week or so.
- There may be some bruising on the skin of your face that can take up to ten days to fade away.

Is there anything else I need to do after the extraction?

Written information in the form of a post-operative extraction information leaflet will be issued to you immediately after the wisdom tooth surgery, along with a full verbal explanation by the clinician or nurse. You will receive information on how to look after your mouth, control the pain as well as what to do and who to contact if complications arise after your wisdom tooth surgery. You will be advised not to smoke for a few days following the treatment; you may want to speak to your GP/ pharmacist for advice on nicotine replacement options (patches or chewing gum).

Do I need to take time off work?

It depends how you feel and on the type of work you carry out but usually it will be necessary to take a few days off work and avoid strenuous exercise over this time. Depending on the type of anaesthetic used you will not be able to drive or operate any machinery for 24 hours after intravenous sedation and a general anaesthetic. Appropriate leaflets will be issued to you explaining this in greater detail.

What are the possible risks and complications?

Removal of wisdom teeth is a very safe and common procedure but there are some risks associated with all procedures.

- **Bleeding-** Most bleeding will have stopped shortly after the operation. However blood stained saliva is normal for the next 24 hours. Should the area bleed again when you get home this can usually be stopped by applying pressure over the area for 20 minutes with a rolled up handkerchief or similar (not tissue). If the bleeding does not stop, please contact the department or A&E if out of hours.
- **Dry socket-** Sometimes healing may be delayed if the blood clot is dislodged from the extraction socket causing discomfort: this is also called a dry socket. Smoking in the first few days after treatment increases the chance of this occurring.
- **Infection-** Occasionally, the operation site may become infected and post-operative antibiotics may be required. Keeping the area clean and not smoking really helps to prevent this.
- **Altered sensation-** There are two nerves that lie very close to the roots of the lower wisdom teeth. One of these nerves supplies feeling to your lower lip, chin, lower teeth and gums. The other supplies feeling to the side of your tongue and helps with taste. Sometimes these nerves may be bruised, stretched or unavoidably injured when a wisdom tooth is taken out.

This does not alter your appearance in any way but can cause tingling, numbness, or pain sensation in your lower lip, chin or tongue, and very rarely results in altered taste or loss of taste. About one in 10 people have some tingling or numbness that can last several weeks. Less than one in 100 people will have problems that last more than 6 months. These risks may be higher if your tooth is in a difficult position. The surgeon will tell you if you are considered at increased risk. Should you experience any such persistent changes or worsening rather than improvement of your condition you will need to contact the department and ask to be seen for a review appointment. A member of staff will be happy to see you and provide advice and treatment if required.

At your consultation appointment prior to treatment, a clinician will provide you with other necessary information on risks and complications, which are relevant specifically to you. If you have any further questions please speak to a member of staff.

Contact Details

 University Dental Hospital Manchester (0161) 393 7736

Monday to Friday 9.00 am-5.00 pm. For out of hours emergencies please call 111 or attend your local Accident and Emergency Department.

 <http://www.mft.nhs.uk/dental>