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Removal of impacted wisdom teeth



Patient information

Removal of Impacted Wisdom Teeth



This leaflet has been designed to improve your understanding of your forthcoming treatment and has answers to many of the commonly asked questions. Please ask if you have any other questions would like further explanation please ask.

The problem

- The wisdom tooth (or third molar) is usually the last tooth to erupt into the mouth any time 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 jawbone.

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 the developing wisdom tooth.

What does 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 and separate the tooth 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.

Alternative treatment- Coronectomy

- A coronectomy may be a treatment option
- It may be offered if the inferior dental nerve is in close contact to the wisdom tooth. In this technique only the upper portion of the wisdom tooth is removed leaving some of the tooth roots behind. This to minimise the risk of to the nerve.
- However, there is a 3% risk that you may need to have the remaining roots out at a later date as there may be delayed healing
- At the consultation an assessment will be made to see if this option is appropriate for you

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 like 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.

- **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, although you are put to sleep completely you will be able to go home on the same day as surgery.

You may be admitted to Day Surgery to have the procedure done under a General Anaesthetic. If this is necessary you should be able to go home the same day, once you have recovered from the anaesthetic.

You will need to make arrangements for someone to collect and be with you for 24 hours after discharge.

How long does it take to remove a wisdom tooth?

This is 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 45 minutes or longer to extract.

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

It is likely that there will be pain, bruising and swelling both on the inside the mouth and outside on the face and neck after surgery. This usually gets worse before it gets better and it may take up to two weeks before all this goes. You may also find that your jaw is stiff and opening reduced. If it is likely to be painful your surgeon will arrange painkillers for you. As the socket heals you will also notice the site looking yellow, ulcerated and sloughy, this is part of the healing process.

Are there any things I should do when I get home?

- Be careful not to bite numb areas of your mouth,
- For 24hrs avoid rinsing your mouth out vigorously as this may cause bleeding,
- You should clean your teeth normally, being gentle around the site of the extraction,
- To prevent infection or food catching around the stitches, gently rinse three times a day with warm salt water (dissolve a teaspoon of kitchen salt in a cup of warm water) commencing 24 hours after surgery,
- Eat soft foods that can be fork mash able. Cold such as ice cream can be soothing.

Are there things I should avoid?

- No activity that can increase heart rate such as heavy lifting or exercise for 24 hours after surgery,
- No alcohol for three days or smoking for minimum seven days after procedure,
- No rinsing for 24 hours after the procedure,
- Avoid touching the surgical area with tongue or fingers,
- Avoid hot drinks for 24 hours after the procedure.

Do I need to take time off work?

Usually, it will be necessary to take at least a day off work. Depending on the type of anaesthetic used you may not be able to drive (24 hours after intravenous sedation and 48 hours after a general anaesthetic).

What are the possible problems?

- **Bleeding**- Although there may be a little bleeding at the time of the extraction this usually stops very quickly and is unlikely to be a problem if the wound is stitched. Should the area begin to actively bleed this can usually be stopped by applying pressure over the area for at least 15 minutes with a rolled-up handkerchief or swab. If the bleeding does not stop after 30 minutes of continuous pressure, please contact the department.
- **Infection** is uncommon particularly if antibiotics are used.
- **Nerve injury** - There are two nerves that lie very close to the roots of the lower wisdom teeth. One of these nerves supply feeling to your lower lip, chin and lower teeth. The other supplies feeling to your tongue and helps with taste. Sometimes these nerves may be bruised when a wisdom tooth is taken out. This can cause tingling or numbness in your lip, chin or tongue and more rarely altered taste. About one in 10 people will have some tingling or numbness that can last several weeks. Less than one in 100 people will have problems that last more than a year and permanent damage to the nerve is very rare. These may be higher if your tooth is in a difficult position. The surgeon will tell you if you are considered to be at an increased risk.
- **Dry socket** occurs whereby the clot does not remain in the extraction socket. This presents with significant pain a couple days after the extraction. Those who smoke/ vape are at particularly high risk of this therefore we advise you refrain from smoking/ vaping for 7 days post extraction to allow the best chance of healing. Additionally, there is a higher risk of infection with smoking.
- **Weakening of the Jaw** - In exceptional cases wisdom tooth removal can cause significant weakening of the jaw with the resultant possibility of jaw fracture. The incidence of this happening is extremely low and is less than 1% (less than 1 in 100)

How to contact us

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Ask for bleep number 900, ask for the Oral Surgery SHO on call

*Extracts for this piece of work were taken from Saint Luke's Health System, Healthline and WebMD.
The British Association of Oral Surgeons: www.baos.org.uk*

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Language



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Where can I park?

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The external car park ticket machines on all sites **only accept cash**. However, you can pay by card via the [Saba parking app](#) (excluding AMEX), or search Saba parking app at the [App store](#) or [Google play](#).

Please note: due to current redevelopment works at St Albans, parking is very limited.

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Department	Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery
Ratified / review date	Aug 2025 / Aug 2028
ID number	38-2463-V1