



A guide to...

Wisdom Tooth Extraction

Patient information

How to contact us

Oral and Maxillofacial Department
Watford General Hospital
West Hertfordshire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust
Vicarage Road, Watford, Hertfordshire WD18 0HB

If you need this leaflet in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01923 217 187** or email **westherts.pals@nhs.uk**



Department	Oral and Maxillofacial Department
Ratified / Review Date	May 2023 / May 2026
ID Number	38-2106-V2



The purpose of this leaflet is to answer frequently asked questions about the removal of impacted wisdom teeth.

Why remove wisdom teeth?

Wisdom teeth are the last teeth at the end of the upper and lower gums. The medical name for the wisdom teeth is the third molars, and there are usually four of them.

Wisdom teeth usually grow through the gums during your late teens or early twenties. The other 28 adult teeth are already in place by this time, so sometimes there is not enough room for the wisdom teeth in the mouth.

As they grow, wisdom teeth are often obstructed by other teeth and the lack of space. This means they may emerge at an incorrect angle or end up in the wrong place, or only partially emerge. Wisdom teeth that grow through in this way are known as 'impacted'.

Not all impacted wisdom teeth will need to be removed, but sometimes they can cause dental health problems. Your dentist will advise you if it is necessary to remove any wisdom teeth.

Before deciding whether to remove any wisdom teeth, i.e. by extraction, your dentist will make a thorough examination of your teeth, gums and jaw. This will usually involve taking an X-ray of your mouth in order to identify the nature of the problem.

The X-ray will help to determine whether or not you will need to be admitted to hospital so that a specialist (an oral surgeon) can perform the extraction.

If you are attending the Day Surgery Unit, your extraction will be performed by a specialist oral surgeon.

What are the risks of wisdom tooth extraction?

- Alveolar osteitis (or dry socket), a disturbance of the blood clot which forms naturally after extraction
- Temporary or permanent nerve damage
- Infection (see your dentist if you suspect the extraction site has become infected)
- Haemorrhage (very heavy bleeding; see your dentist if you are experiencing excess bleeding)
- Temporary local swelling, pain and restricted mouth opening

What type of anaesthetic will I be given?

Before wisdom tooth extraction, you will be given a local anaesthetic by injection (most commonly lidocaine) to numb the tooth and the surrounding area.

If you are particularly anxious about the procedure, your oral surgeon may give you some medicine to help you relax or, possibly, a general anaesthetic.

What happens after the surgery?

When the operation has been completed you will be transferred to the recovery room where you will be given time to recover from the anaesthetic.

If an incision has been made, it may be necessary to use self-dissolving stitches to seal the gum. You will be told if this has been done and how long the stitches should take to dissolve.

You may be told to place some gauze over the site of the extraction and asked to keep pressure on it by biting your jaws together for up to an hour. This is to allow a blood clot to form in the empty tooth socket. Blood clots are a vital part of the healing process and you should try not to dislodge them.

Before you leave hospital you will be given advice about how to care for your mouth and pain management.

Self-care advice

In order to assist your recovery following the removal of your wisdom teeth you should:

- Treat the pain using painkillers, such as paracetamol, aspirin or ibuprofen (always read and follow the manufacturer's dosage instructions)
- Avoid strenuous activity and exercise for a few days
- Use an extra pillow to support your head and provide extra comfort at night
- Avoid rinsing, spitting or anything else that may dislodge the blood clots forming in the empty tooth socket
- Avoid smoking and drinking alcohol
- Eat soft or liquid food for a few days and chew with your other teeth.

Further information

www.baoms.org.uk/patients/procedures/23/removal_of_impacted_wisdom_teeth