

Oral surgery and restorative dentistry

Wisdom teeth in minor oral surgery

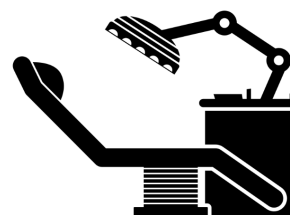
Information for patients, relatives and carers

What are wisdom teeth?

Wisdom teeth, or third molars, are the last teeth to emerge at the back of the mouth, typically between the ages of 18 and 22. Sometimes they don't come through properly and get stuck under the gum or partially emerge (they become impacted).

Reasons for removing wisdom teeth include:

- Repeated gum infections (pericoronitis)
- Tooth decay that can't be repaired
- Dental abscesses
- Cyst formation around the tooth
- There are other less common reasons for removal (extractions) that your dentist might discuss with you.



Do wisdom teeth always cause problems?

No, if they are not causing a problem, they can be left and do not need surgical treatment or removal.

Do wisdom teeth cause crowding of my front teeth?

No, there is no evidence to support wisdom teeth causing crowding of front teeth. This is not a reason to remove wisdom teeth.

What are the treatment options?

Treatment options for problematic wisdom teeth often involve removal. Simple removals can take just a few minutes. Moreover complex cases might take 30 to 40 minutes. These can involve lifting the gum, drilling bone, and sectioning the tooth into smaller pieces. After removal, we will use dissolvable stitches to close the gum. Your surgeon will explain to you what will happen.

What type of anaesthetic is available?

We use local anaesthetic. This is an injection to numb your jaw and means that you will feel no pain during the procedure. We can also use sedation through a vein (intravenous) to reduce any anxiety.

Please note, we do not offer general anaesthesia. If you need general anaesthesia, we will refer you to the Eastman Dental Hospital.

Will I need time off work?

It is usually best to allow two to three days to recover. Sometimes recovery can take longer.

What can I expect after surgery?

- Pain: Normal for three to seven days, which you can manage with painkillers as advised by your surgeon.
- Swelling and bruising: Peaks 48 to 72 hours after surgery.
- Bleeding: Should stop after the operation, but you might notice blood-stained on the first day.
- Jaw stiffness: Soreness and discomfort for three to four days. We recommend you have a soft diet during this time.
- Teeth sensitivity: Common next to the removal site, and usually resolves with good oral hygiene.
- Bad breath: This can happen but usually lasts less than a week.
- Healing period: The socket may take up to two months to close. You will need to clean it carefully to stop food from getting stuck.



Your surgeon will give you detailed instructions on how to manage these symptoms.

What are the complications of wisdom tooth removal?

- **Dry socket:** This is the delayed healing of a socket (where the tooth was removed) and happens in five to ten out of 100 (5-10%) patients. This is because of a breakdown in wound healing, and happens typically two to four days post-operation. It's more common in smokers and those having lower wisdom teeth removed.
- **Infection:** Less than one in 100 (1%) patients may experience pain, swelling, and bad taste three to seven days after surgery. Severe cases might need a hospital stay and intravenous antibiotics.
- **Altered sensation:** Lower wisdom teeth are near nerves that supply sensation to the lower lip, chin, teeth, gums, and tongue. Nerve injury risk is generally low (between zero

and two in 100 patients) but can be higher (up to 20 in 100 patients) in some cases. Most nerve injuries are temporary, and resolve within six months, but some can be permanent. Symptoms range from mild tingling to total numbness and, rarely, nerve pain.

- We assess your risk of **nerve injury** using dental X-rays. If you're at high risk, we might offer you a three-dimensional (cone beam CT) scan to get a more accurate picture. For high-risk cases, we might recommend a coronectomy, where only the crown of the tooth is removed and the roots are left to minimize nerve injury risk.
 - If you're considered high-risk, your surgeon will talk to you about this option in detail. Not all high-risk patients are suitable for this procedure.
- **Damage to adjacent teeth:** Large fillings or crowns can be dislodged during surgery, meaning you would need further dental treatment.
- **Sinus problems:** Upper wisdom teeth near the air sinus may cause a puncture, needing additional surgery. This however is rare.
- For more information, please at the Royal College of Surgeons in England, the British Dental Health Foundation, and the British Association of Oral Surgeons, using the links or QR codes below.



<https://www.rcseng.ac.uk/patient-care/recovering-from-surgery/wisdom-teeth-extraction/>



<https://www.dentalhealth.org/wisdom-teeth>



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

Hours and contact information

- Monday to Thursday: 08.30 to 17.00
- Friday: 08.30 to 15.00

Phone number: **020 3313 0403**

Oral surgery clinics are open on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

Restorative dentistry clinics are open on Wednesday and Thursday.

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3312 7777** (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday). You can also email PALS at imperial.pals@nhs.net The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street
London W2 1NY

Email: ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team: imperial.communications@nhs.net

Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: www.imperial.nhs.uk