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Wisdom Teeth

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What are wisdom teeth?

Wisdom teeth are the last teeth to erupt (come through) into the back of the mouth, usually between the ages of 18-24 years.

Not everybody has wisdom teeth and not all wisdom teeth erupt.

If the teeth do not erupt, they may only partially come into the mouth and may cause problems. It is usually the lower wisdom teeth that cause problems.

Problems associated with wisdom teeth, requiring them to be extracted are :

-  Pain and swelling of the overlying gum
-  Untreatable tooth decay
-  Abscesses
-  Cysts associated with tooth
-  Orthodontic reasons

How are wisdom teeth removed?

Your wisdom teeth will be assessed to see if they are suitable to be removed under local anaesthesia (injection in mouth). If they are, you can have them removed in the dental surgery.

Should a general anaesthetic be required, you will be referred to the hospital and this will be discussed with you.

The gum may need to be lifted back and the tooth cut into pieces to take it out. You will have dissolvable stitches to hold the gum back in place.



What to expect after surgery

You will have swelling and possibly bruising as well as decreased mouth opening over the 2-3 days following surgery. This will gradually improve over the next 10-14 days.

Simple painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen used singly or in combination should be sufficient for pain relief. You may be prescribed antibiotics and a mouthwash.

You will be seen for review after 2 weeks but should contact the surgery earlier if you have any concerns. Your stitches may still be present at review.

Risks of surgery

Every operation carries some risk and those associated with wisdom teeth are listed below.

Bleeding

This can be minimised if you avoid alcohol, smoking and excessive exercise. Rinsing should not be done for 24 hours.

Infection

This is more common in people who smoke. Tooth brushing and rinsing with a mouthwash are important to prevent this.

Altered sensation to the lower lip and tongue

Temporary or permanent numbness of the lip and/or tongue on the same side as the wisdom tooth may occur when lower wisdom teeth are removed. The appearance of the lip and tongue are not altered and they will still move. This is a rare complication.

Damage to other teeth and fillings

You will be warned if this is likely.

