

MF01lite Removing Wisdom Teeth

Expires end of December 2019

A more detailed version of this procedure specific information sheet is available. Please ask your health practitioner at Joondalup Health Campus for a copy.

Write questions or notes here:



This document will give you information about removing wisdom teeth. If you have any questions, you should ask your GP or other relevant health professional.

What are wisdom teeth?

Wisdom teeth are the teeth at the back of your mouth (the third molar teeth). They tend to come through (erupt) in the late teens or twenties. Some wisdom teeth do not come through fully (partly erupt) and get stuck (or impacted). This often leaves a flap of gum over your tooth (see figure 1). Others grow too long (over erupt).

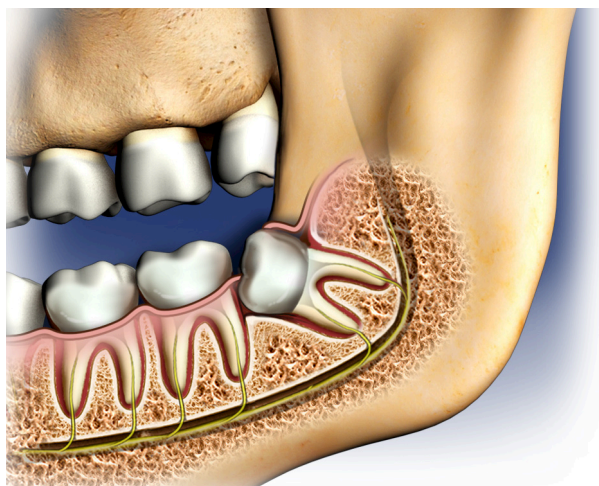


Figure 1

An impacted lower wisdom tooth

A wisdom tooth may need to be removed for several reasons such as tooth decay, repeated or serious infection, to make space to move other teeth, or to prevent damage to the cheek or gum.

Are there any alternatives to removing a wisdom tooth?

Simple painkillers such as paracetamol can help control mild pain.

Antibiotics and rinsing with hot, salty water or chlorhexidine mouthwash can help when the area around the wisdom tooth is infected. These measures give only temporary relief from symptoms and do not treat the underlying cause. Removing the gum lying over your tooth (operculectomy) may be possible in certain cases if a wisdom tooth has partly erupted.

What does the operation involve?

Most upper wisdom teeth can be removed easily under a local anaesthetic. Lower wisdom teeth can be more difficult to remove. Sometimes you will need a general anaesthetic.

The operation usually takes 10 minutes to an hour. Removing a wisdom tooth can involve cutting the gum to uncover your tooth, removing bone around your tooth and dividing your tooth with a drill.

What complications can happen?

1 General complications

- Pain
- Bleeding
- Swelling and bruising
- Infection

2 Specific complications

- Dry socket
- Retained roots
- Damage to nearby teeth
- Sinus problems
- Broken jaw
- Not being able to open your mouth fully (trismus) and jaw stiffness
- Damage to nerves
- Osteonecrosis, a rare condition where tissue in your jawbone starts to die

How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home the same day. Depending on the difficulty of the operation and the risk of infection, you may be given antibiotics. To reduce the risk of bleeding, swelling and bruising, do not exercise, drink alcohol or have a hot bath for one to two weeks. You may need to take up to a week off work.

Regular exercise should help you to return to normal activities as soon as possible. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Most people make a full recovery.

Summary

Wisdom teeth can sometimes cause serious problems. Removing a wisdom tooth is usually a safe and effective way to prevent your symptoms from coming back.

Acknowledgements

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