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“ABOUT WISDOM TEETH”

Information for patients

What are wisdom teeth?

Wisdom teeth are the third molar teeth, also known by dentists as "eights" because of their position in the mouth. They are the last of the permanent teeth to develop.

Why do my wisdom teeth not come up fully?

Because the wisdom teeth are the last to develop and the last to come up (erupt) and because our jaws are often not large enough for all our teeth there is not enough space for them. They may develop in an abnormal alignment

What does impacted mean?

Impacted means that the tooth is jammed against another tooth or against the jawbone and cannot erupt.

Is this why I can see only part or none of my Wisdom tooth?

Yes! In addition to being deeply situated, they are often covered by a flap or tag of gum, known as the operculum.

Does this cause trouble?

The space between the wisdom tooth and the flap of gum is difficult to clean. Food and other debris known as plaque accumulate and encourage bacterial growth. This may result in several different problems such as inflammation of the gum over or around the wisdom tooth (pericoronitis) which may be quite severe, decay (caries) in the wisdom tooth or in the tooth in front, and gum disease (periodontitis) in the adjacent teeth. Rarely, cysts may develop in relation to buried wisdom teeth.

Do impacted wisdom teeth cause crooked front teeth?

This is unlikely in most cases and in general unproven but opinion differs about this.

Must all wisdom teeth be removed?

No! Each tooth should be assessed individually and judged on its own merits, other measures are available to control the problem and may be appropriate in your case.



Removal of wisdom teeth

Removal of wisdom teeth is an operation and like every other operation has side effects and complications and usually involves the placement of one or more sutures (stitches)

What are the side effects?

These occur after every operation to some degree. Soreness, swelling and stiffness of the jaw with restricted mouth opening usually clear up after about a week or so after the operation. Some bleeding during the operation is inevitable but this is rarely severe or troublesome.

What are the complications?

These are much less common but do occur from time to time. Because the nerve to your lip runs through your jaw and the nerve to your tongue lies on your jaw near the wisdom tooth these are at risk of being damaged. This may produce an alteration in the feeling in the lip or tongue. This may be felt as numbness (anaesthesia) or as "pins and needles" (paraesthesia) It does not involve any paralysis of the lip or tongue. It does not cause any deformity. It can be permanent but this is relatively rare.

Does every wisdom tooth removal carry the same risk?

No! It depends on the type and difficulty of the impaction and other factors.

The figures below are based on several studies and give some idea of the frequency.

Sensory alteration in the tongue: 1:200 (0.5%)

Sensory alteration in the lip: 1:250 (0.4%)

The staff will be happy to discuss this further with you and will try to answer any queries you may have. If you wish to contact the clinic.

I confirm that I have read this information sheet and have been shown my X-ray, which has been explained to me.

Patient's Signature: _____

Date:

Witness's Signature: _____

Date:

The decision to proceed with the removal of your wisdom tooth (or teeth) can only be made by you. You may discuss it with your family or friends.

You do not have to make up your mind immediately.