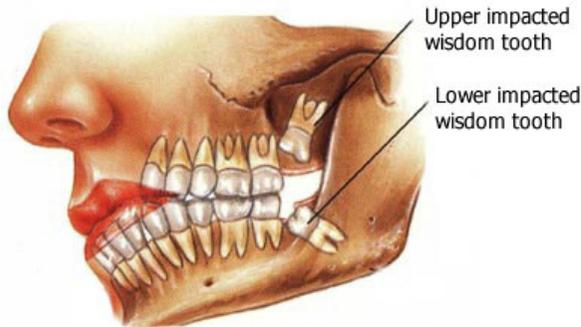


# Wisdom Teeth

Wisdom teeth are also known as third molars. They can erupt into the mouth at any age from late teens and are usually the last teeth to erupt into the mouth. Not everyone has wisdom teeth, and people may have any number between none and four. There is often very little space at the back of the jaw for wisdomteeth to erupt into, and the tooth may become trapped or wedged-known as “impacted”. If they remain buried, some wisdom teeth may cause no problems, but other impacted wisdom teeth can cause severe problems. If one or more of your wisdom teeth causes problems, your dentist may recommend that they be removed. If the removal is anticipated to be complicated due to their shape and position, your dentist may recommend referral to an oral and maxillofacial surgeon.



## Locations

Lvl 4, 175 Collins st, Melbourne  
Suite 2, 109 Union Rd, Surrey Hills

## PROBLEMS CAUSED BY WISDOM TEETH

### Infection

Once the tooth starts to push through, an infection may start as debris builds up under the covering flap of gum, and may cause pain, swelling and stiffness in the jaw. It may also cause difficulty swallowing, bad breath and an unpleasant taste. The person may feel unwell.

### Pain

As well as a result of infection, pain may be caused by pressure of the wisdom tooth on the tooth next door to it.

### Crowding

Pressure from a wisdom tooth may push nearby teeth and alter their position

### Cysts

Cyst formation can occur around an unerupted tooth such as a wisdom tooth. Whilst uncommon, cysts can destroy bone and damage other teeth and gums.

### Damage to adjacent teeth

Continued pushing from a wisdom tooth on the tooth next door to it can result in an "erosion cavity" on the adjacent tooth and can lead to serious damage to both teeth, and may result in infection or an abscess. Removal of both teeth may be needed.

### Food Trap

Food may become trapped between the wisdom tooth and the tooth in front of it. This can cause cavities in both teeth which may be difficult to access and treat and may result in the loss of one or both teeth.

### Ulcer

Upper wisdom teeth may push sideways out of the gum and this can cause an ulcer with possible infection where the tooth rubs against the inside of the cheek.

## TREATMENT OF WISDOM TOOTH INFECTIONS

Your dentist may clean around the infected area gently. You may be advised to rinse your mouth with salt water (a teaspoon of salt in a glass of warm, but not hot water), and you may be advised to use a disinfecting mouthwash and painkillers. Antibiotics may be prescribed. You should always tell your dentist of any allergic reactions you have had to antibiotics or other drugs.

You may be advised by your dentist to delay any necessary wisdom tooth surgery until after any infection has subsided with treatment. You may also be advised to delay a decision on wisdom tooth surgery if there is a possibility of the problem resolving once the tooth has pushed through the gum fully. Some impacted wisdom teeth may never cause problems and therefore may not require removal.

If your dentist feels the wisdom tooth can be removed if necessary without being too complicated you will be asked to sign a consent form, and you are encouraged to ask your dentist about anything you are unsure about. If the wisdom tooth is likely to require a more complicated surgical removal, your dentist may refer you to an oral and maxillofacial surgeon.

Sometimes, your dentist may recommend that your wisdom teeth are removed early or before they start to give problems particularly where you have had, or need orthodontic work, or where continued development of the roots may result in more complicated surgery if delayed.

## **AFTERCARE FOR WISDOM TOOTH SURGERY**

Rest at home after surgery

Do not drive, exercise or operate machinery

Take several days off work or school as required

Do not drink alcoholic drinks after surgery and when taking antibiotics or painkillers

Do not smoke, as smoking can increase the risk of post operative infection in the socket

Eat soft food such as soups

Drink plenty of fluids

Use ice packs to reduce swelling and pain

## **PAIN AFTER SURGERY**

Some people experience more pain than others following surgery. Your dentist can prescribe a pain killer for you. Pain usually starts to subside after the second day, but some people require pain relief for upto a week. Tell your dentist if the pain does not seem to be getting less

## **SWELLING AFTER SURGERY**

Swelling almost always occurs after surgery to varying degrees, and can take 4-5 days to go down. Swelling can be reduced by using icepacks on the overlying cheeks.

## **BLEEDING**

It is normal to experience a small amount of blood oozing for a day or so after surgery. Any more significant bleeding can be stopped by firm pressure applied by biting on a gauze pack. Your dentist will instruct you in how to do this. It is important to not disturb the area again once a blood clot has formed or the bleeding may start again. Bleeding should stop by the second day. If it does not, or the bleeding is significant, contact your dentist.

## **MEDICAL HISTORY**

It is very important that your dentist is aware of your dental and medical history. Some medical problems may interfere with surgery, anaesthesia, and aftercare, for example any bleeding disorders. You will be asked to fill out a medical history form with a list of all medications you are or have been taking. Tell your dentist if you are, or may be pregnant as this could affect your treatment for example xray examination, anaesthesia and treatment with antibiotics or other medicines.

## **X-RAY EXAMINATION**

Your dentist will need to take x-ray films of your jaw to determine the position of the tooth and whether there could be complications in removing it. The films help your dentist plan the treatment of the tooth in the best possible way.

## **WHERE TO HAVE YOUR WISDOM TOOTH SURGERY**

Your dentist can advise you as to whether your wisdom teeth should be removed in the dental surgery or in hospital. In either case you should not drive after surgery so ask a friend to take you home after the surgery. You may have been given a sedative to help you relax.

If the surgery is relatively straightforward you may be able to have your wisdom teeth removed with local anaesthetic by an injection. However in some cases your dentist may recommend general anaesthesia or "going to sleep" for wisdom tooth removal. This is done by a specialist anaesthetist, and may be done at the patient's request or because the wisdom teeth may be difficult to remove. You will be asked questions about your medical history prior to general anaesthesia. If you have ever had a reaction to an anaesthetic drug, tell your dentist.

## **WISDOM TOOTH REMOVAL**

Your dentist will need to make an incision to remove impacted wisdom teeth. Some of the bone surrounding the tooth may also require removal to get to the tooth. Often, the tooth is divided into segments to allow for easier removal. Once the tooth is removed, the incision is closed with stitches which will either dissolve after a few days, or you may be asked to return to have them removed.

### **Locations**

**Lvl 4, 175 Collins st, Melbourne  
Suite 2, 109 Union Rd, Surrey Hills**

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## **POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF SURGERY**

All surgery carries risks, and complications may occur after wisdom tooth removal.

### **Numbness or altered sensation**

Impacted wisdom teeth may be close to, or even touching nerves, which may result in bruising of the nerve. This bruising can cause numbness and tingling in the mouth and on the lower part of the face. Injured nerves usually heal over time, which is usually around four weeks, but may be as long as 6-18 months. In rare cases the nerve may not heal and the altered sensation is permanent.

### **Dry Socket**

The blood clot which formed in the socket after the wisdom tooth's removal may be washed away or dissolve, exposing the underlying bone. This is known as a "dry socket" which causes constant throbbing pain which may last a number of days. Contact your dentist. The risk of dry socket can be reduced by

not rinsing on the first day after surgery

rinsing gently after the first day with warm salt water every four hours

not smoking after surgery

not brushing the area on the first day after surgery

## **COST**

You should be provided with an estimate of cost before you commence treatment. Should any additional work become necessary due to unforeseen circumstances your dentist will advise you of this and any additional costs at the time.

### **Infection**

If you have an infection in the gum or bone surrounding the socket it will be treated with antibiotics. Make sure you tell your dentist of any allergic or other reactions to antibiotics or other drugs.

### **Difficulty opening mouth**

This is common after wisdom tooth removal and will subside usually after a few days as swelling reduces.

### **Fever**

Body temperature may be slightly increased following surgery. This should reduce after 12-24 hours. If it does not, contact your dentist as this could be a sign of infection or other problems.

### **Excessive bleeding**

This is rare but can occur. It can be caused by overexertion following surgery, or by vomiting after surgery. Bleeding can be stopped by biting pressure on a gauze bite pack for 15 minutes. If bleeding does not stop contact your dentist at once.

### **Damage to surrounding tissues**

Rarely, adjacent teeth or fillings may be chipped or loosened. Sores on the lip may be caused by stretching of the tissues during the procedure, and usually heal without problems.

### **Vomiting**

Vomiting may be a reaction to the effects of the anaesthetic.

### **Sinus problems**

Rarely, a small opening in the sinus may be a result of the proximity of the roots of upper wisdom teeth to the sinus. These usually heal without problems, but you may be prescribed antibiotics to prevent or treat infection.

### **Weakening of the jaw**

Wisdom tooth removal can result in the weakening of the jaw bone, although this is rare, and usually only occurs only in the elderly.

The above is not an exhaustive list, and there may be very additional very rare complications of wisdom tooth surgery.

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