



### Wisdom teeth.

Often a controversial topic. This newsletter aims to shed light on some of the most common questions people have about their wisdom teeth.

# Dentalk

## Do I need my wisdom teeth removed???

Third molars, or wisdom teeth as they are commonly called, are the last to emerge into the mouth. In females, they are expected to erupt into the mouth at 18-20 years old and a little later in males, around 25 years old.

Thanks to evolution, human jaws have declined in size and third molars are no longer needed to process the highly refined foods of the Western diet. This is why a lot of people experience problems with their wisdom teeth; the lack of space renders them 'impacted' into the jaw bone.

Impacted wisdom teeth can create several problems

- >Difficult to clean
- >Food trapping beneath the flap of tissue covering part of the wisdom tooth (operculum)
- >Decay in wisdom tooth and/or the second molar ahead of it (see picture below)
- >Infection of gum and bone
- >Painful when eating and brushing
- >Swelling of the cheek
- >Cyst development
- >Root resorption



Of course the benefits of taking out wisdom teeth must outweigh the risks. The risk of complications decreases the younger you are.

Some risks associated with wisdom tooth removal include:

- >Pain, swelling, bruising as a result of the surgical nature of the procedure. It may take up to 7 days to recover.
- >Damage to the sensory nerve supplying the lower lip and/or tongue. May be transient or permanent.
- >Root fragments may fracture and be left in the jaws
- >Communication may be made between the oral cavity and the sinus of the upper jaw
- >Chronic sinusitis
- >Damage to adjacent teeth and soft tissues
- >Risks associated with general anaesthesia

Your dentist will assess the likelihood of any complications with the aid of an OPG and CBVT. These are special images taken off-site and at no cost to you. Your dentist will advise you if these are necessary and provide you with a referral slip to obtain these images.



## What are my options for removal?

Many people find the prospect of getting their wisdom teeth out a bit daunting. Depending on the status of your wisdom teeth, a variety of options are often available so the experience can be made as comfortable as possible.

>**Local anaesthetic only.** This is usually not advised, however is the cheapest option and can be considered when the wisdom teeth are in a favourable position.

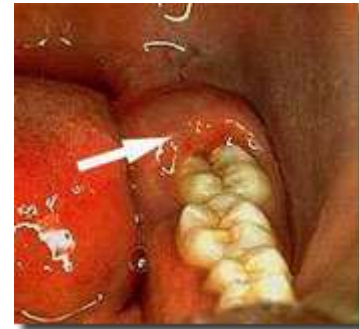
>**Oral sedation.** Anti-anxiety medication is prescribed and taken prior to the appointment.

>**IV sedation.** An anaesthetist places you under conscious sedation while your teeth are being removed in our clinics.

>**General Anaesthetic.** Performed in a private hospital, it is the preferred option particularly for those with private hospital insurance.

## My wisdom teeth hurt!

Erupting or impacted wisdom teeth may flare up from time to time and cause you pain. This is known as pericoronitis. This occurs as the area is difficult to clean and food can get trapped underneath the pockets of overlying gum tissue, causing them to become acutely inflamed.



In extreme cases the swelling can present a potentially serious medical problem so contact your dentist as soon as you begin to notice any of the above symptoms. In the interim, rinsing with warm salt water may relieve any mild discomfort. Ensure you keep your fluids up and consider paracetamol or ibuprofen for pain relief.

To prevent this from occurring be sure to have your dentist assess the status of your wisdom teeth *before* potential problems arise.

## Did you know?

- Approximately 33% of people are born without wisdom teeth.
- Usually your wisdom teeth start developing within your jaws when you are 8 years old.
- On average, girls will get their wisdom teeth before boys. In females, wisdom teeth usually erupt between 18-20 years. Males should expect their wisdom teeth between ages 21-24.

## My wisdom teeth are making my front teeth crooked!

This comment is common among patients and provides misconceived motivation for wisdom tooth extraction. The evidence surrounding this notion is controversial however the current view is that wisdom teeth play little if not no role in causing late crowding of the front teeth. Research does not support significant lessening of crowding once the wisdom teeth are removed.

## Practice news

### After hours hygiene services have been extended

A hygienist is now available until 9pm on Thursday evenings and 8am-5:30pm on Saturdays. Please book in early as these are highly sought after times.

#### A reminder...

We would like to remind our valued patients that we require at least 72 hours notice for any cancellations. For IV sedation appointments, 3 weeks notice is required. Please note a late cancellation or failure to attend an appointment may incur a fee.