

# Removal of wisdom teeth under general anaesthetic

Department of Maxillofacial Surgery

**This leaflet has been designed to improve your understanding of any forthcoming treatment and contains answers to many of the commonly asked questions. If you have any other questions that the leaflet does not answer or would like further explanation please ask.**

## **Why do my teeth need to be extracted?**

The wisdom tooth (or third molar) is usually the last tooth to erupt into the mouth anytime after about 16 years of age. Frequently there is not enough room to accommodate wisdom teeth and as such they do not come into the mouth normally. When this happens, the wisdom teeth are said to be 'impacted'. Wisdom teeth are usually either impacted forwards into the tooth in front or backwards into the jaw bone.

## **Why do I need treatment?**

An impacted wisdom tooth can cause a number of problems that mean the tooth is best removed. Most commonly these are:

- Repeated attacks of infection in the gum surrounding the tooth. This leads to pain and swelling.
- Food packing which causes decay in either the wisdom tooth or the tooth in front.
- Cysts can form around the wisdom tooth if it does not come into the mouth properly. A cyst occurs when fluid fills the sack that normally surrounds a developing wisdom tooth.

During your assessment, the reasons for the extraction of your wisdom tooth will be discussed with you. If you are not happy that you understand why the wisdom teeth need to be removed then please contact us.

## **What will the general anaesthetic involve?**

On your assessment it has been discussed to extract your tooth under general anaesthetic. This means you will be asleep for the procedure. This is carried out as a 'day case'- you may be in hospital for several hours but you will be able to go home on the same day. You may be asked to come in for a 'pre assessment appointment' prior to the

surgery to make sure you are fit and well to be asleep for the procedure. On the day of the surgery you must have someone to collect you and look after you for 24 hours. Following general anaesthetic we recommend up to a week off work. You do not need a sick note, unless you have taken more than a week off work.

## What will the procedure involve?

The procedure either involves simple removal of the tooth out of its socket or, sometimes, a cut in the gum over the tooth and removal of some bone surrounding the crown of the wisdom tooth. It may become necessary to cut the tooth into 2 or 3 pieces to remove it. Once the wisdom tooth has been removed the gum is put back into place with stitches. In the majority of cases these stitches are dissolvable and can take up to two weeks to dissolve.

## How long does it take to remove a wisdom tooth?

This is a variable. Some wisdom teeth may take only a few minutes to remove. More difficult wisdom teeth can take up to 40 minutes to extract.

## Are there any risks?

With dental extractions there is a risk of pain, bleeding, bruising, stiffness in opening the mouth, swelling and infection.

## Is there much pain or swelling after the removal of wisdom teeth?

It is likely that there will be some discomfort and swelling both on the inside and outside of your mouth after surgery. This is usually worse for the first three days but it may take up to two weeks before all the soreness goes. You may also find that your jaw is stiff and you may need to eat a soft diet for a week or so. It is likely you will need regular painkillers for 3-4 days after the procedure. It may also be necessary for you to have a course of antibiotics after the extraction. There may be some bruising of the skin of your face that can take up to a fortnight to fade away.

## Numbness of the lip, chin, tongue

There are two main nerves which run through the lower jaw: one going to the tongue and one going to the lower lip, which lie near lower wisdom teeth and there is a risk these nerves can be damaged temporarily or permanently. The risk of permanent numbness to part of the lip and chin depends on the closeness of the wisdom tooth to the main nerve. Specifically with lower wisdom teeth there is a 1% risk of permanent numbness to the lip, chin and tongue.

This will be discussed again when you come in for your surgery. If you have any further questions or concerns regarding numbness, please ask. **If the numbness continues for a week or more following the procedure we advise you to contact the oral and maxillofacial surgery department on the numbers given.**

## Who do I contact if I have concerns following my procedure?

If you are worried and would like further advice, please do not hesitate to contact us. A doctor is available to deal with your concerns 24 hours a day. **During normal working hours, Monday to Friday 8 am until 5 pm please telephone the Maxillofacial clinic where your procedure was carried out:**

**Royal Sussex County Hospital, Brighton – 01273 696955 Ext. 4067**  
**Princess Royal Hospital, Haywards Heath – 01444 441881 Ext. 8308**

**For advice during evenings, weekends and on public holidays,** our partner organisation, Queen Victoria Hospital, East Grinstead has a doctor available to assist with any concerns.

**Queen Victoria Hospital - 01342 414000 Ext. 6635**

Evening hours – Monday to Friday 5 pm until 8 am

Weekend hours – Friday, 5 pm to Monday, 8 am

Public holidays – 24 hours cover.

Please ensure you have your patient reference number to hand when you contact us.

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Disclaimer

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is in no way intended to replace professional clinical advice by a qualified practitioner.

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