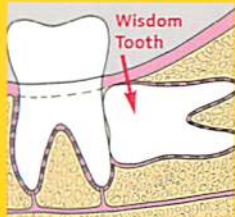


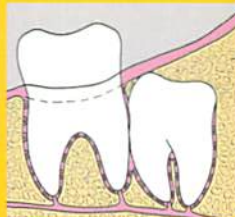
# Wisdom Teeth

Wisdom teeth that are healthy and properly positioned can be an asset. Commonly, however, wisdom teeth are misaligned or erupt only partially, or not at all. They remain trapped beneath the gum and bone or crowded by other teeth. Wisdom teeth may tilt sideways and cause damage to teeth next to them.

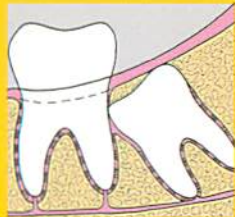
Regular dental checkups are important to allow your dentist to track the progress and condition of your teeth. After examining your mouth and taking x-rays, your dentist can evaluate your wisdom teeth and discuss whether or not they should be removed.



Horizontal Impaction



Vertical Impaction



Angular Impaction

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Dental Treatment

# Your Wisdom Teeth



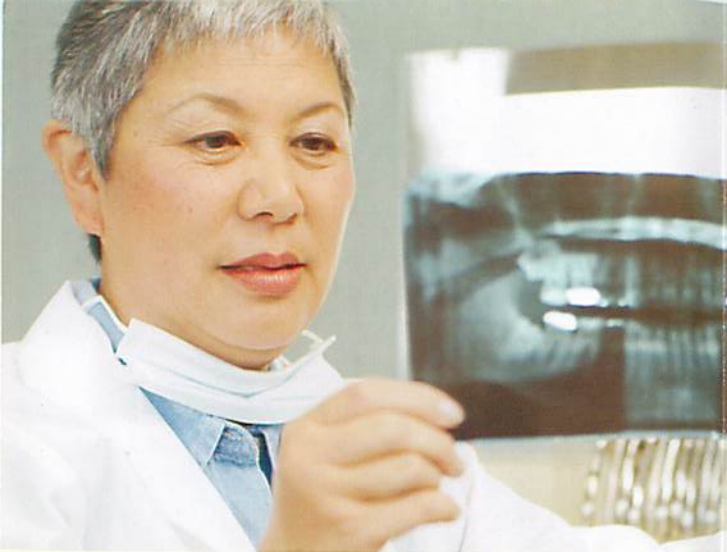
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## Why And When Are Wisdom Teeth Removed?

Wisdom teeth are far back in the mouth. They often are not needed for chewing and are difficult to brush and floss. Your dentist may recommend the removal of your wisdom teeth, because waiting until you are older can increase the risk of problems.

### Removal of wisdom teeth may prevent these types of problems:

- Infection caused by a wisdom tooth partially erupting through the gum and creating an opening where bacteria may enter. Pain, swelling and jaw stiffness may result.
- Damage or crowding of adjacent teeth caused by a wisdom tooth without enough room in the jaw or one that is poorly aligned.
- A fluid-filled sac (cyst) or tumor forming on or near an impacted tooth, destroying surrounding bone or tooth roots.

A general dentist can perform wisdom tooth extractions. However, if your dentist anticipates a need for any special care, you may be referred to an oral and maxillofacial surgeon. This is a dentist who specializes in surgery of the hard and soft tissues of the mouth, including the removal of impacted wisdom teeth.

## What Can You Expect?

### Before Surgery

- Your dentist will explain what to expect and help you plan for the appointment. Advice probably will include dressing comfortably in loose clothing and perhaps arranging for someone to be with you after your dental visit.
- Extractions can be performed under local anesthesia. Your dentist can discuss what types of anesthesia and pain- or anxiety-reducing medication are available and suitable for you.
- Talk to your dentist about any concerns or questions you have about the procedure, and how you can get advice after office hours if you develop a problem. If your general dentist refers you to a specialist, the two of them will work together to provide you with the best and most effective care.
- Before surgery is scheduled, it's especially important to tell your dentist about past illnesses and current medications — both prescription and over-the-counter drugs.

### Following surgery, you may experience:

- Swelling and discomfort, which is part of the normal healing process. Cold compresses can help decrease the swelling. Medication prescribed by your dentist also can help relieve discomfort. You may be instructed to drink only clear liquids after the surgery until you can comfortably begin to eat soft foods.
- Numbness or tingling in the face or jaw after surgery. Normal sensation usually returns within a few days. In rare cases, nerve damage may result. If you experience numbness or tingling longer than a few days, consult your dentist.
- Dry socket. This condition occasionally occurs when the blood clot breaks down sooner than normal. If this happens, your dentist may place a special dressing in the tooth's socket to protect it as it heals. Symptoms include a dull ache and foul odor, but they may not appear for three or four days. Contact your dentist if you notice these symptoms.



## At Different Ages

Wisdom teeth are so called because they are the last teeth to come in, at about the time of young adulthood — the age when a person gains maturity and thus wisdom. The majority of us have most of our permanent (adult) teeth by age 13, followed by our wisdom teeth (third molars), which usually push their way through the gums or become impacted between ages 17–21. After age 21, wisdom tooth removal becomes more complicated.

Not everyone's teeth develop on the same schedule. See your dentist regularly so he or she can monitor the progress of your wisdom teeth.