

Overview

Wisdom tooth removal

— Overview

— [Recovery](#)

Your wisdom teeth grow at the back of your gums and are the last teeth to come through. Most people have 4 wisdom teeth – 1 in each corner.

When to see a dentist

Your dentist will check your teeth and tell you if they need to be removed.

If you are not in pain, ask your dentist to check your wisdom teeth during your regular check-up. They can tell you if they may cause you pain in the future.

Your wisdom tooth or teeth can be removed by a dentist or a specialist surgeon working in a hospital.

You should discuss the cost with your dentist before the procedure begins.

Make an appointment to see your dentist as soon as possible if your wisdom teeth are causing severe pain.

Before removal

If your dentist recommends removing your wisdom teeth, they'll take an x-ray of your mouth. This will give them a full view of the position of your teeth.

Before the tooth removal, you'll get an injection of local anaesthetic. This numbs the tooth and surrounding area.

If you're very worried, your dentist or surgeon may give you a sedative to help you relax. This usually involves an injection into your arm.

General anaesthetic is sometimes necessary. When it's needed, your wisdom tooth will be removed in hospital. You should still be able to go home on the same day as the procedure.

Removing the wisdom tooth

If the tooth has not come through the gum, your dentist will make a small incision (cut) into the gum to access it. A small piece of the bone covering the tooth may also need to be removed.

They may cut your tooth into smaller parts to make it easier to remove through the opening. There's less need to make an incision if the tooth has broken through the gum.

You'll feel some pressure just before they remove your tooth. This is because they need to widen the tooth socket by rocking the tooth back and forth before taking it out.

Surgery to remove wisdom teeth should not be painful, because the area will be numb. But, if you feel pain during the procedure, tell your dentist so they can give you more anaesthetic.

How long it takes to remove the tooth varies. Simple procedures can take a few minutes, but it can take longer than 20 minutes if it's more complicated.

Removing your wisdom teeth carries some risks. But, these risks are usually small.

Risks can include:

- dry socket – where a blood clot does not develop in the tooth socket, or if the blood clot becomes dislodged
- nerve injury – this can cause pain and numbness
- infection – yellow or white discharge coming from the extraction site with a high temperature, pain and swelling
- bleeding

After removal

If an incision has been made, the dentist may use dissolving stitches to seal the gum. Your dentist will tell you how long the stitches take to dissolve – usually 7 to 10 days.

Your dentist may place gauze over the site of the tooth removal. They may ask you to keep pressure on it by biting your jaws together for up to an hour. This is to allow a blood clot to form in the empty tooth socket. Blood clots are part of the healing process, so try not to remove them.

You may be prescribed antibiotics if you have an ongoing infection.

For the first 24 hours after removing your wisdom tooth, you should avoid:

- rinsing your mouth out with liquid
- drinking alcohol and smoking
- drinking hot liquids such as tea or soup
- a heavy level of physical activity

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