

# Wisdom Teeth: Your Treatment Plan

If one or more of your wisdom teeth are likely to cause problems, your surgeon may advise removal. This can ease your symptoms and protect your dental health. In some cases, you may be advised to wait or to try other treatments first.



## Early removal is often advised

Your surgeon may advise removing the wisdom teeth now, even if you have no symptoms. This is because wisdom teeth roots mature and become more firmly attached to the bone as you age. This makes removal more difficult. It also increases the risk of complications. And people heal more slowly as they grow older.

## Other options may be possible

The position of wisdom teeth roots may make removal unwise. Or surgery may not be advised because of another health problem. Other options include:

- **Close follow-up.** Regular exams and X-rays can be done to check for signs of complications.
- **Medicines.** These can be used to control some symptoms and treat infections.
- **Minor surgery.** In some cases a procedure such as removing the gum tissue overlapping the tooth (operculectomy) may help.

## Risks of wisdom teeth removal

Any surgery has risks. The risks of wisdom teeth removal vary depending on your age and the position of the teeth. Talk with your surgeon to make sure you understand the procedure and possible risks. Risks may include:

- **Sore joints and muscles.** Jaw soreness, bruising, or swelling is normal after removal. You may also have problems with the jaw joint or trouble opening your mouth fully. These problems often go away in 1 to 2 weeks. But sometimes they last longer and need treatment.
- **Dry socket.** After surgery, a blood clot fills the extraction site. A clot that dissolves or dislodges too soon after surgery can cause pain and slow recovery. Dry socket is

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treated with a special dressing.

- **Infection.** This is often treated with antibiotics or by draining the infection.
- **Bleeding.** Minor bleeding can usually be stopped with pressure. Follow your surgeon's instructions.
- **Side effects of anesthesia.** Sedation or general anesthesia can cause nausea, sore throat, and other side effects.
- **Sinus problems.** The maxillary sinus cavity may be entered during surgery. You may need more treatment.
- **Nerve injury.** This can cause loss of taste. It may also cause areas of numbness, tingling, or pain in the teeth, gum, tongue, or lips. In most cases, the nerve heals over time. But more treatment may be needed.
- **Jaw weakness.** If bone has been removed, the jawbone may become more likely to break (fracture).