Wisdom Teeth

Wisdom teeth, or third molars, are the final teeth to develop. Most of us have four wisdom teeth, one in each corner of the mouth. They usually emerge during our late teens or early twenties.

Often times, **wisdom teeth become trapped or impacted in the jawbone or simply fail to erupt.** This can cause crowding or displacement of other teeth or lead to the development of localized tooth decay, infection, or gum disease. Impacted wisdom teeth are set in the jawbone in unusual positions, sometimes horizontally, which stops them from erupting in a normal way.
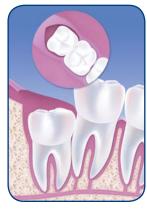

Angular, bony impaction of third molar (wisdom tooth).

Soft tissue impaction of third molar.

In most cases, it is recommended that impacted wisdom teeth be extracted. Depending on the position of the tooth, **third molar or wisdom tooth removal** can be performed in your dentist's office, at an outpatient surgical facility, or in a hospital.

TYPICAL PROCEDURE

An incision is made and overlying soft tissue and bone are removed, exposing the crown of the impacted tooth.

The tooth is extracted whole or surgically cut into large pieces, which can be removed separately if the entire tooth cannot be removed at once. The site is closed with stitches.

If the tooth is not impacted, extraction is the same as with other teeth.

To ease any discomfort and promote healing:

- Use ice packs on the cheek for swelling, alternating on and off every thirty minutes
- Apply biting pressure with clean gauze to stop bleeding
- Eat soft foods and drink extra liquids
- Avoid hard or crunchy foods in the tender area
- Brush carefully the day after surgery
- Take prescribed medications and follow all instructions
- Avoid the use of drinking straws to preserve the blood clot in the tooth socket
- Your dentist may recommend use of a therapeutic rinse

Call your dentist or physician immediately in case of excessive bleeding, swelling, persistent or severe pain, or fever.

Be sure to follow the special home care instructions provided by your dental professional.

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