



Bradford Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Maxillofacial Unit • Patient Information Leaflet

Advice for Patients Prior to Removal of Impacted Wisdom Teeth



This leaflet has been designed to improve your understanding of your forthcoming treatment and 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.

- **Nerve damage** – There are two nerves that lie very close to the roots of the lower wisdom teeth. One of these nerves supplies feeling to your lower lip, chin and lower teeth. The other supplies feeling to your tongue and helps with taste.

Sometimes these nerves may be bruised or stretched when a wisdom tooth is taken out. This can cause an altered sensation/feeling to your lip, chin or tongue, and more rarely altered taste, which can be temporary or in very rare cases can be permanent.

About one in 10 people will have some tingling or numbness that can last several weeks. Less than one in 100 people will have problems that last more than a year.

These risks may be higher if your tooth is in a difficult position. The surgeon will tell you if you are considered to be at an increased risk.

Is there anything else I need to do after the extractions?

It is important to keep the extraction sites as clean as possible for the first few weeks after surgery. It may be difficult to clean your teeth around the sites of the extraction because it is sore and if this is the case it is best to keep the area free from food debris by gently rinsing with warm salt water (dissolve a level teaspoon of kitchen salt in a cup of warm water) or antiseptic mouthwash commencing on the day after surgery.

What does the treatment involve?

Because the wisdom tooth has not fully erupted into the mouth it is often necessary to make a cut in the gum over the tooth. Sometimes it is also necessary to remove some bone surrounding the crown of the wisdom tooth. Sometimes the tooth needs to be cut into 2 or 3 pieces to remove it. Once the wisdom tooth has been removed the gum is put back into place with stitches. These stitches are dissolvable and take around two weeks to dissolve.

What type of anaesthetic is used?

A number of options are available and depend on how difficult the wisdom tooth is to remove

- Local anaesthetic – this is an injection into gum surrounding the wisdom tooth, similar to that you may have had at your dentist for a filling.

The injection takes a couple of minutes to numb the area and means that you will feel no pain while the wisdom tooth is removed. This is the best option for wisdom teeth that are simple to remove.

- General anaesthetic – if the wisdom tooth to be extracted is more difficult it is usually possible to remove wisdom teeth under a “day case” general anaesthetic, at the BRI ie although you are put to sleep completely you will be able to go home on the same day as surgery, as long as there is someone to stay with you for 24 hours. You are unable to drive following surgery also for a period of 24 hours.

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 that need to be cut into pieces to remove can take longer.

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. If it is likely to be sore your surgeon will arrange painkillers for you.

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 extend to the eyes, chest and neck which can take up to a fortnight to fade away.

What are the possible problems?

- **Bleeding** – This should have stopped by the time you leave the hospital. Should the area bleed again when you get home this can usually be stopped by applying pressure over the area for at least 30 minutes with a rolled up handkerchief or gauze. If the bleeding does not stop, please contact the department.
- **Infection** – Is relatively uncommon but it can occur if good oral hygiene is not maintained or if you smoke.

The problem

The wisdom tooth (or third molar) is usually the last to break through the gum (erupt) into the mouth usually 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 (a fluid filled sack) can form around the wisdom tooth if it does not come into the mouth properly.

Do I need to take any time off work?

Usually it will be necessary to take a few days off work and avoid strenuous exercise for this time.

If you are worried about your post-operative condition, please contact:

- Oral & Maxillofacial Unit 01274 365200 Monday to Friday 9:00am to 5:00pm
- Oral & Maxillofacial SHO on call via switchboard 01274 542200 - Monday to Friday 5.00pm to 9.00am and all weekend.
- You can contact us using the Relay UK app. Textphone users will need to dial 18001 ahead of the number to be contacted.

Wristbands

When you are in hospital it is essential to wear a wristband at all times to ensure your safety during your stay.

The wristband will contain accurate details about you on it including all of the essential information that staff need to identify you correctly and give you the right care. All hospital patients including babies, children and older people should wear the wristband at all times.

If you do not have a wristband whilst in hospital, please ask a member of staff for one. If it comes off or is uncomfortable, ask a member of staff to replace it.

Smoking

Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust is a smoke-free organisation. You are not permitted to smoke or use e-cigarettes in any of the hospital buildings or grounds.

If you need this information in another format or language, please ask a member of staff to arrange this for you.

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