

Removal of impacted wisdom teeth



Information for patients

This leaflet aims to help you understand the treatment you are going to have and contains answers to many commonly asked questions. If you have any other questions or would like further explanation, please ask.

Confirming your identity

Before you have a treatment or procedure, our staff will ask you your **name** and **date of birth** and check your **ID band**. If you don't have an ID band we will also ask you to confirm your address.

If we don't ask these questions, then please ask us to check.

Ensuring your safety is our primary concern.

What is an impacted wisdom tooth?

Wisdom teeth (third molars) are usually the last new teeth you get, normally when you are over 16. Often there is not enough room in your mouth for wisdom teeth, so they do not grow normally.

When this happens, your wisdom teeth are said to be 'impacted'. Wisdom teeth are usually impacted forwards into the tooth in front or backwards into your jaw bone.

Why do I need this surgery?

An impacted wisdom tooth can cause a number of problems so it may be necessary to have it removed.

The most common problems are:

- Repeated infections in the gum surrounding your wisdom tooth. This causes pain and swelling.
- Food packing, which causes decay in either your wisdom tooth or the tooth in front.
- Cyst formation around your wisdom tooth. You get a cyst when fluid fills the sack that normally surrounds a developing wisdom tooth.

What happens before the surgery?

Your doctor or dentist will explain further what to expect during the operation and what the likely outcome will be.

Before the surgery, you will be given an anaesthetic so you will not feel any pain. You have a number of options:

1. Local anaesthetic – this is an injection into the gum surrounding the infected area. The injection takes a few minutes to numb your gum and means you will feel no pain during the procedure.



2. Local anaesthetic and intravenous sedation – in addition to a local anaesthetic injection you can have an injection in your arm. This makes you feel relaxed, sleepy and less aware of the procedure.

3. General anaesthetic – this involves being put to sleep completely. It is usually only given to patients who are having extremely difficult surgery. Although you will be put to sleep completely, you will be able to go home on the same day after your surgery.

What are the benefits of the surgery?

The main benefit of removing your impacted wisdom tooth is that it will get rid of any existing infection and prevent further infection in the future.

Where will it be carried out?

Your impacted wisdom teeth will be removed in a clinic within the Oral Surgery Department in King's College Hospital Dental Institute.

Do I need to prepare for the surgery?

Your doctor/dentist will discuss with you how to prepare for your operation at the preoperative assessment. It is important to discuss the operation with your doctor/dentist so you know what to expect. You may need to arrange for a friend or a relative to come with you.



Consent

We must by law obtain your consent for treatment. Your written consent is required for treatment under intravenous sedation or general anaesthesia. Staff will explain all the risks, benefits and alternatives before they ask you to give consent. If you are unsure about any aspect of the treatment proposed, please do not hesitate to speak with a senior member of staff again.

You must confirm your consent for the procedure before treatment starts.

What happens during the operation?

It may be necessary for your dental surgeon to make a cut in the gum over your tooth if it has not fully come through your gum and into your mouth (erupted). The removal of some of the bone surrounding the crown of your wisdom tooth or less commonly the cutting of your tooth into pieces in order to remove it may also be required.

Your gum will then be put back into place, usually using dissolvable stitches which take around two weeks to disappear.

How long will the surgery take?

This varies. Some wisdom teeth take only a few minutes to remove. More difficult extractions, where teeth need to be cut into pieces, can take up to 45 minutes.

What happens after the surgery?

You are likely to have 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 for the soreness to go. Your surgeon will prescribe you effective painkillers.



You may also find that your jaw is stiff and you may need to eat only soft food for a week or so. There may be some bruising on your face that can take up to two weeks to fade away.

It is important to keep the extraction sites as clean as possible for the first few weeks after your surgery. If you find it difficult to clean your teeth around where your tooth was removed because it is sore, you can keep the area free of bits of food by gently rinsing with a mouthwash after each meal. Alternatively, you can rinse your mouth with a solution of warm salt water. Simply dissolve a teaspoon of table salt in a cup of warm water and start using this on the day after your surgery.

Do I need to take any time off work?

We usually advise you to stay off work and avoid strenuous exercise for a few days. Depending on the type of anaesthetic you had, you should not drive:

- until the next day after intravenous sedation.
- for 48 hours after a general anaesthetic.

Will I need further appointments?

Your doctor/dentist will let you know if you need any further appointments.

Are there any risks?

- **Bleeding** – although you may have a little bleeding during the procedure, this usually stops very quickly and is unlikely to be a problem if the wound is stitched.

If the area bleeds again when you get home, you can usually stop it by applying pressure over the area for at least 10 minutes with a rolled-up handkerchief or a swab of cotton wool. If the bleeding does not stop, please contact us.



- **Nerves** – there are two nerves that lie very close to the roots of your 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’ when a wisdom tooth is taken out. This can cause a tingling or numbness in your lip, chin or tongue and, more rarely, altered taste.

About one in 10 people will have some tingling or numbness that can last several weeks. Fewer than one in 100 will have problems that last more than a year. These risks may be higher if your tooth is in a difficult position. Your surgeon will tell you if you are considered to be at increased risk.

If you find that your lip or tongue feels numb or tingles in the days following your extraction, please telephone our receptionists on 020 3299 3263 to make an appointment on an Oral Surgery Consultant Clinic

- **Infection** – although there is a small chance of infection, this is uncommon.

Are there any alternative treatments?

There are no satisfactory alternatives to removing the cause of the infection – your wisdom tooth. If you do not have your tooth removed, you will keep getting painful infections.



Who can I contact with queries and concerns?

If you have any questions or problems, please contact us at:

Department of Oral Surgery,

King's College Hospital Dental Institute,

King's College Hospital, Bessemer Road, London SE5 9RS

Tel **020 3299 2620**, between 9am and 5pm (Monday to Friday)

Sharing your information

We have teamed up with Guy's and St Thomas' Hospitals in a partnership known as King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at Guy's or St Thomas'. To make sure everyone you meet always has the most up-to-date information about your health, we may share information about you between the hospitals.

Care provided by students

We provide clinical training where our students get practical experience by treating patients. Please tell your doctor or nurse if you do not want students to be involved in your care. Your treatment will not be affected by your decision.



PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. The PALS office is located on the ground floor of the Hambleton Wing, near the main entrance on Bessemer Road - staff will be happy to direct you.

PALS at King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS

Tel: **020 3299 3601**

Email: **kch-tr.PALS@nhs.net**

You can also contact us by using our online form at

www.kch.nhs.uk/contact/pals

If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact PALS on 020 3299 1844.