

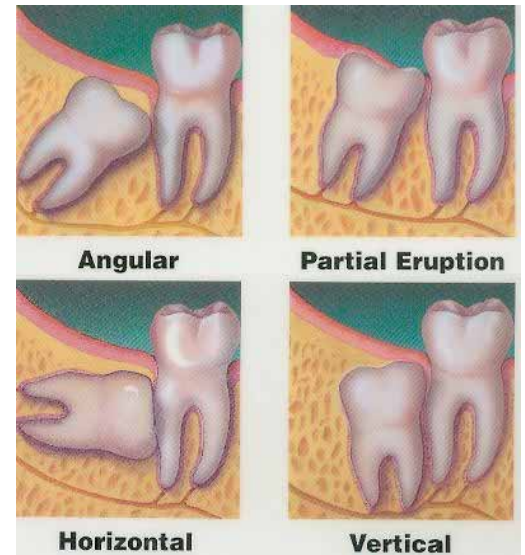
Wisdom Tooth Extraction

Why am I having this treatment?

One of the most common surgical procedures in Australia is the removal of wisdom teeth. It is not known why we have wisdom teeth or why they tend to develop in such an unfavourable manner. Wisdom teeth are the last molars (third molars) in each quadrant of our dentitions. They usually come through the gum between the ages of 18 and 25 yrs old. Often there is not enough space for them to come through fully and only part of the tooth protrudes through the gum (partial eruption). Alternatively, they may be angular, horizontal or vertical.

As a result they may:

- a) be associated with an infection in the gum around the tooth
- b) damage the molar tooth in front
- c) develop small cysts or other growths around the crown



What are the important risks involved?

The surgical removal of wisdom teeth is a very common procedure. After treatment, there is often some swelling and mild pain. Thankfully, unfavourable outcomes are rare. It is nonetheless important you clearly understand the risks involved before consenting to treatment.

There are two nerves which sometimes pass in close proximity to the lower wisdom tooth. One travels through the jawbone and passes forward, giving feeling to the lip and the chin. The other travels under the gum to the tongue side of the tooth and gives feeling to the tongue. Rarely, these nerves could be damaged. This leads to numbness or an altered sensation (e.g. "tingle") in the lip, the chin and/or the tongue. Usually, any sensation changes are temporary but very rarely, they can be permanent. Such a nerve injury will not affect your appearance (e.g. smile) but it would affect your sensation (feeling).

Following your extractions, your jaw may be quite sore to open and close. This rarely lasts more than 10 days. You will save yourself much discomfort by eating a soft diet during this period.

The risk of infection is greatly reduced by rinsing with mouthwash, tooth brushing and by not smoking. If you are a smoker, arrange some nicotine patches prior to treatment.

What options are available?

The removal of all four wisdom teeth usually involves a small surgical procedure. It can be performed safely in the dental chair under local anaesthetic. For more complex cases or where patients are anxious, intravenous sedation (sleep dentistry) can be arranged. This safe form of sedation places you in a "twilight sleep", oblivious to the sights and sounds of the dental setting. You will usually have very little, if any, recollection. We operate with an experienced medical doctor who maintains a full-time dental sedation practice.