

Wisdom teeth removal

Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please contact the PALS desk on 01271 314090 or at ndht.pals@nhs.net.

Background and why removal is needed

You have been referred to a specialist because you are having problems with your wisdom teeth. This leaflet gives you information about what to expect.

Wisdom teeth usually come through the gums from teenage years and above. Not all wisdom teeth cause problems that require them to be removed. There are strict guidelines about when wisdom teeth should be removed by the Royal College of Surgeons and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). This is usually because of infection or damage to adjacent teeth. Wisdom teeth are not believed to cause pressure on, or crowding of, the front teeth.

What does it involve?

At your appointment, a history of your symptoms and of your general health will be taken, x-rays of your teeth will be assessed and we will discuss the findings with you before we decide if any of your wisdom teeth need to be removed.

If your wisdom teeth do need to be removed, as with any surgical procedure, you could expect some discomfort and swelling afterwards. To help with this you will be advised to take painkillers before your local anesthetic wears off, and to continue taking these regularly for at least 5 to 7 days or until pain begins to subside.

Special preparations

We will need your consent to have your wisdom teeth removed, and the operation is normally carried out at a separate appointment. Treatment is usually under local anesthetic in the dental surgery.

What are the risks?

You will be advised about the risks of damage to nearby structures, particularly the nerves that supply the feeling to your lip and tongue, which can sometimes pass very close to, through or alongside the roots of lower wisdom teeth. Bruising or damage to these nerves can occasionally cause altered sensation to the lip, cheek, chin or tongue. Usually this gets better, but sometimes it does not and can be permanent. Altered sensation can include numbness, burning, tingling, hypersensitivity or pain. You may experience some change in taste coinciding with numbness of the tongue.

Aftercare

There is a risk of some bruising and bleeding after your operation as well as the pain and discomfort that comes with having a tooth removed. There may be dissolvable stitches in place which you will be informed of. These usually take seven to 10 days to come out on their own, by which time the area should have healed.

A small number of patients may suffer from an infection in the socket where the tooth has been removed, but the risk is reduced by not smoking and by regularly using saltwater mouthwashes (we will give you this advice again when you have your operation).

Follow-up

We do not normally need to see you again after you have had your wisdom teeth removed, but if you are worried either your dentist or our emergency dentists would be pleased to offer advice over the telephone or see you if required.

Further information

Other leaflets and guidelines

'Get Well Soon' – Royal College of Surgeon of England
www.rcseng.ac.uk/patients/recovering-from-surgery/wisdom-teeth-extraction

'Guidance on the Extraction of Wisdom Teeth' – NICE guidelines
www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ta1

'Wisdom teeth removal' – Trigeminal Foundation
<http://trigeminalnerve.org.uk/patient-resources/patient-information-sheets/>

Contact details

If you have any questions about this information leaflet, please contact the Salaried Dental Service.

Exeter NHS Dental Access Centre

3rd Floor
Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital (Heavitree)
Gladstone Road, Exeter
EX1 2ED

Tel: 01392 405718
Email: ndht.sds-exeter@nhs.net
Website: www.healthyteethdevon.nhs.uk

Barnstaple NHS Dental Access Centre

3rd Floor
Barnstaple Health Centre
Vicarage Street, Barnstaple
EX32 7BH

Tel: 01271 370562
Email: ndht.sds-barnstaple@nhs.net
Website: www.healthyteethdevon.nhs.uk

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern, call 01271 314090 or email ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at www.careopinion.org.uk.

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