

Removal of wisdom teeth

Maxillofacial Department



Patient information leaflet

The removal or extraction of wisdom teeth

The doctor has recommended that you have one or more of your wisdom teeth removed. This decision was made after examining your mouth, looking at an x-ray of your teeth and listening to any problems with your teeth that you have mentioned.

Why have them removed?

Wisdom teeth are the last teeth to come through in the mouth. They are right at the back on each side, top and bottom. Not everyone has 4 wisdom teeth and they do not always need to come out if they are not causing you a problem.

The usual reason for having them removed is because there is not enough room for them to grow properly. They become impacted and get wedged inside the jaw.

Sometimes they come through the gum only partially; often they remain underneath but push on the next tooth and cause pain. If food debris collects around the tooth it can lead to infection, decay and gum disease. These teeth will continue to cause problems off and on until they are removed.

What happens if I do not want any treatment?

If the teeth are not causing a problem when you attend for consultation, it is possible to leave them alone and your dentist can assess them when you attend for check-ups. If the problem returns he can refer you for another consultation in the Maxillofacial Unit.

How are they removed?

The operation can be done under a local anaesthetic where the mouth is numbed with an injection (just like at the dentist), and usually takes 30–40 minutes. Or you may need a general anaesthetic and be asleep when the teeth come out. Usually you will come into hospital for the day. You may not need to stay in overnight. The doctor will discuss the anaesthetic options with you when you are seen in clinic.

How do I agree to the operation?

You must give your written consent to any operation in hospital. When you come to the hospital for the operation the doctor will explain what it involves and you will be asked to sign a consent form. You will be given your own copy.

What is the operation like?

Wisdom teeth are usually removed with special instruments or forceps, but sometimes a cut needs to be made in the gum and some bone drilled away around the tooth. This will be painless but you will feel the vibrations. Afterwards you will probably have some stitches to help the gum heal. They are usually dissolvable and will come out by themselves.

What are the potential risks or complications?

Most wisdom teeth are removed without causing any problems. These are the risks that can occur:

- Bleeding from the socket
- Infection in the socket
- Damage to the nerves in the jaw

What should I expect afterwards?

Some wisdom teeth are harder to remove than others. The after effects will depend on the degree of difficulty of the extraction.

- **Pain:** there will be some pain and discomfort once the numbness has worn off. You will need to take some painkilling tablets. The doctor may prescribe some stronger tablets if necessary. Take the painkillers regularly for at least the first 2–3 days.
- **Lip or tongue numbness or tingling or altered sensation:** usually lasts for a few hours but may last for much longer. In rare cases it can be permanent.
- **Swelling:** there is usually some swelling and bruising which will get better after the first 2–3 days.
- **Jaw stiffness:** it might be difficult to open your mouth fully for at least two weeks but it will slowly improve.
- **Antibiotics:** the doctor may want you to have a short course of antibiotic tablets (usually 5 days). Make sure you take the complete course even if your mouth feels fine.
- **Work/Sport:** you must not return to work on the day of operation – if you do too much too soon the socket may start bleeding. You may need up to a week off work. Vigorous exercise should be avoided for at least 48 hours.
- **Smoking:** smoking may increase the risk of infection – please do not smoke for 48 hours post operation.

What happens if I need all four wisdom teeth removing?

If you are having them removed under a local anaesthetic then they are usually removed in two stages; one side of your mouth at a time. The second stage takes place about a month after the first to allow healing to take place. This is more comfortable for you and allows you to eat more easily after the operation.

If the teeth are to be removed under a general anaesthetic where you will be asleep for the operation, then all your wisdom teeth will be removed in one procedure only.

What do I do next?

You will either be given a date when the procedure will be done when you attend the clinic or the Admissions Officer will send you a letter asking you to phone and agree a date and time that is convenient when the operation can be done.

You will be sent further information on what you need to do and where you go on arrival.

You will be able to discuss any questions you may have with the doctor before you sign the consent form.

After the operation you will be given another information leaflet with advice on what to do and how to care for your mouth.

In the meantime if you have any more problems or questions please phone the nursing staff on the telephone number shown on the back of this leaflet.

Reference source

- <https://bda.org/>

Any complaints or comments?

If you have any problems or comments on the service provided please contact the doctor or nurses straight away on the telephone number overleaf or write to:

Maxillofacial Department

Royal Surrey County Hospital, Egerton Rd, Guildford, Surrey. GU2 7XX.

Contact details

For further information or advice please contact us.

Maxillofacial Outpatients

Telephone: 01483 406775 (Monday–Friday, 9am–4.30pm)

Outside these hours or in case of an emergency call **01483 571122** and ask for the on-call Maxillofacial doctor.

Operation queries/changes

If you need to cancel your operation or for queries regarding your date of operation contact the **Admissions Office** direct on **01483 402734**.

PALS and Advocacy contact details

Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

Telephone: 01483 402757

Email: rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net

Opening hours: 9.00am–3.00pm, Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

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