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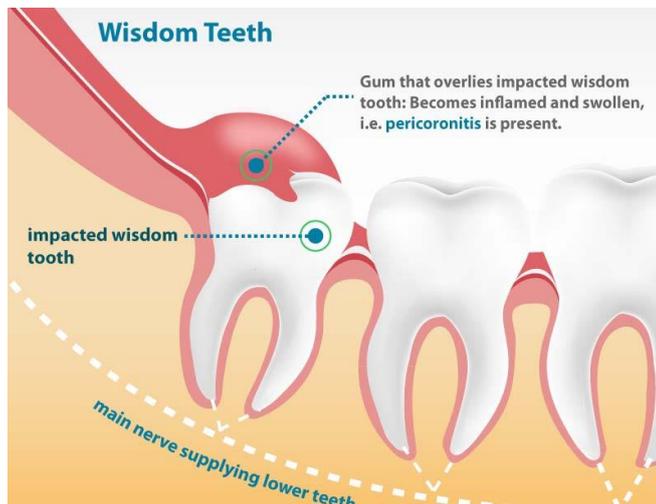
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WISDOM TEETH

Wisdom teeth are rear molars that erupt last, usually around the late teens or early 20s. There are normally two wisdom teeth in the upper jaw and two in the lower jaw. They can cause various dental problems. Sometimes it will be recommended that problematic and painful wisdom teeth be removed.



COMMON PROBLEMS OF WISDOM TEETH

Wisdom teeth infection

In some cases there may not be enough room in the jaw for wisdom teeth. This can make brushing and flossing these teeth very difficult. Food and bacteria will build up between the wisdom tooth and its neighbouring molar, therefore decay and gum infections are more likely.

The symptoms of an infection caused by a wisdom tooth include:

- reddened, inflamed gum alongside the wisdom tooth
- swelling
- pain
- fever
- pus coming from the gum line
- sore lymph glands under the jaw
- difficulty swallowing or opening the mouth

Infections caused by wisdom teeth can be treated, but the infection will keep coming back unless the teeth are removed. People with pre-existing health problems and compromised immunity can suffer serious complications from these infections.

Cheek biting and chewing problems

Crowded wisdom teeth may grate against cheek, causing ulcers on the cheek and chewing problems.

Impaction

Impaction is where the wisdom tooth erupts at an angle and pushes into the next tooth (hard impaction) or the gum (soft impaction). A wisdom tooth that grows on an angle can't contribute to chewing, making it useless as well as potentially painful.

WISDOM TOOTH EXTRACTION

Wisdom tooth extraction, where required, is best performed sooner rather than later.

Using x-rays, your dentist can determine which wisdom teeth need to be removed. Sometimes, a person may need all the wisdom teeth extracted. The operation may be performed in the chair using local anaesthetic or in an operating theatre under a general anaesthetic, depending on the complexity of the problem.

Your jaw and gum are likely to be sore, swollen and prone to bleeding for a few days after the operation. One of the possible post-surgery complications is a dry socket where the site doesn't heal as well as it should. This can be successfully treated by your dentist.

CARING FOR YOUR MOUTH FOLLOWING A TOOTH EXTRACTION

Your dentist or oral health professional will offer instructions on caring for your mouth after surgery, but general suggestions for self-care after a tooth extraction include:

- Take painkillers if required and upon advice from your dentist or other oral health professional.
- Regularly hold a mouthful of warm salty water (after meals only) and upon instruction. Be sure to wait 24 hours after surgery before doing this.
- Eat soft, easy-to-chew foods for the next few days.

The information presented on this leaflet is only a summary of wisdom teeth and should therefore be used only as a guide. It does not replace personal discussion with your dentist. Should you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact us for advice. Please call us on 9840 2963.