



A guide to...

Removal of an Impacted Tooth

Patient information

How to contact us

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If you need this leaflet in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call 01923 217 187 or email westherts.pals@nhs.uk



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This information is about your forthcoming treatment and answers questions you have. Please ask if you have any other questions.

The problem

The tooth usually erupts into the mouth, however, sometimes there is not enough room or the tooth is too far out of position. When this happens, these teeth are said to be 'impacted'.

Why do I need Treatment?

An impacted tooth may cause a number of problems that mean the tooth is best removed. Most commonly these are:

- Resorption of adjacent roots
- Inability to move adjacent teeth for orthodontic purposes
- Cysts can form around these teeth if it does not come into the mouth properly. A cyst occurs when fluid fills the sack that normally surrounds the developing wisdom tooth.

What does treatment involve?

Because the tooth has not erupted into the mouth it is often necessary to make a cut in the gum over the tooth. Sometimes it is also necessary to remove some bone surrounding the crown of the tooth. Sometimes the tooth needs to be cut into two or three pieces to remove it. Once the tooth has been removed the gum is put back into place with stitches. In the majority of cases these stitches are dissolvable and take around two weeks to disappear.

What type of anaesthetic is used?

A number of options are available and depend on how difficult the impacted tooth is to remove.

- Local anaesthetic – this is an injection into gum surrounding the tooth, rather similar to that you may have had at your dentist for a filling. The injection takes a couple of minutes to numb the area and means that you will feel no pain while the tooth is removed. You may also be offered oral sedation which requires you to attend one hour prior to your appointment to take a medication to make you more relaxed.
- Local anaesthetic and intravenous sedation – in addition to a local anaesthetic injection you can be given an injection into your arm. This makes you feel relaxed and less aware of the procedure.
- General anaesthetic – it is usually possible to remove teeth under a "day case" general anaesthetic, although you are put to sleep completely you will be able to go home on the same day as surgery.

You may be admitted to Day Surgery to have the procedure done under a General Anaesthetic. If this is necessary you should be able to go home the same day, once you have recovered from the anaesthetic. You will need to make arrangements for someone to collect and be with you for 24hrs after discharge.

How long does it take to remove an impacted tooth?

This is variable. Some teeth may take only a few minutes to remove. More difficult impacted teeth that need to be cut into pieces to remove can take longer to extract.

Is there much pain or swelling after the removal of impacted teeth?

It is likely that there will be pain, bruising and swelling both on the inside and outside of your mouth after surgery. This usually gets worse before it gets better and it may take up to two weeks before all this goes. You may also find that your jaw is stiff and you may need to eat a soft diet for a week or so. If it is likely to be painful your surgeon will arrange painkillers for you. There may be some bruising of the skin of your face that can take up to a fortnight to fade away. As the socket heals you will also notice the site looking yellow, ulcerated and sloughy, this is part of the healing process.

Is there anything else I need to do after the extractions?

It is important to keep the extraction sites as clean as possible for the first few weeks after surgery. You can do this by brushing the rest of your teeth normally and gently brushing over the extraction site. It is best to keep the area free from food debris by gently rinsing with a mouthwash or warm salt water (dissolve a flat teaspoon of kitchen salt in a cup of warm water) commencing 24 hours after the surgery.

Do I need to take time off work?

Usually, it will be necessary to take a few days off work and avoid strenuous exercise for this time. Depending on the type of anaesthetic used you may well not be able to drive (24 hours after intravenous sedation and 48 hours after a general anaesthetic).

What are the possible problems?

- Although there may be a little bleeding at the time of the extraction this usually stops very quickly and is unlikely to be a problem if the wound is stitched. Should the area begin to actively bleed this can usually be stopped by applying pressure over the area for at least 15 minutes with a rolled-up handkerchief or swab. If the bleeding does not stop after 45 minutes of continuous pressure, please contact the department.
- Infection is uncommon particularly if antibiotics are used.

If you have a queries or problems here are some useful numbers:

Watford General Hospital

Oral Surgery Department

Monday – Thursday - 9.00am to 5.00pm

Friday 9.00am to 4.30pm

Tel: 01923 217205

Tel: via switchboard: 01923 244366 - Ext: 3855

Northwick Park Hospital

Tel: 020 8864 3232

After 5pm and at weekends ask for Oral Surgery, Senior House Officer (SHO) on call.