Do I Need My Wisdom Teeth Removed? Signs | Core Dental

Canonical: https://www.coredental.com.au/how-will-i-know-if-i-need-my-wisdom-teeth-removal/

Details:

The easiest way to find out is to have your dentist examine your mouth and take an X-ray. Your dentist will review your dental and medical history and assess the position and angle of your wisdom teeth. Because wisdom teeth can cause problems without any symptoms, regular check-ups and up-to-date X-rays help us monitor them. Pain at the back of the mouth, swollen gums, a bad taste or difficulty opening your mouth are common signs that they should be checked. At Core Dental we will explain your options clearly.

How can I find out if I need my wisdom teeth removed?

Visit your dentist for an examination. At Core Dental we start by reviewing your dental and medical history, then look at your teeth and gums and usually recommend an X-ray, so we can see the position and angulation of each wisdom tooth below the gum.

You may not feel any symptoms, so up-to-date X-rays and regular check-ups and cleans are a sensible way to monitor your wisdom teeth over time. Many people do not know there is a problem until a tooth has already decayed or become infected.

What symptoms mean my wisdom teeth should be checked?

Please book an examination if you notice any of the following:

tenderness or pain at the back of the mouth

difficulty chewing

red, swollen or uncomfortable gums

sore lymph nodes or a fever

a persistent bad taste in the mouth

unpleasant breath odour

difficulty opening your mouth fully

These signs can also have other causes, so an examination is the only reliable way to find out what is happening. Our article on wisdom tooth pain explains more about what can cause discomfort at the back of the mouth.

When is wisdom tooth removal generally recommended?

Your dentist may suggest removal when:

the tooth is impacted, meaning it grows at an angle or does not fully emerge through the gum

infection or repeated infection is likely, for example pericoronitis, which is inflammation of the gum around a partly erupted tooth

there is a risk of damage to the neighbouring teeth

removing the tooth now may help avoid more complicated surgery later

Every mouth is different. Your dentist will base any recommendation on your examination and X-rays.

When is wisdom tooth removal generally not recommended?

Removal is often not recommended when:

there is a high risk of nerve injury during the extraction

the wisdom teeth and the teeth next to them are healthy, with no decay or cavities

the wisdom teeth are fully functional and easy to keep clean

they are not pressing on neighbouring teeth or causing crowding

In these cases we may simply monitor the teeth at your regular check-ups.

Is it better to have wisdom teeth removed at a younger age?

Research generally suggests that people in their late teens and twenties tend to have less pain and swelling after wisdom tooth surgery than older adults, and recovery is often easier. That said, age alone is not a reason to remove a healthy tooth. Your dentist will weigh up your age, your X-rays and your overall health before making a recommendation.

Why do wisdom teeth cause problems?

Most people have four wisdom teeth, also called third molars, although some people have fewer or none at all. They tend to come through in the late teens or early twenties. Many mouths do not have enough room for them, so they can grow sideways or become impacted.

Because wisdom teeth sit so far back, they can also be hard to reach with a toothbrush, particularly if you have a strong gag reflex. Food and plaque build up, and the teeth can decay and cause toothache. Dentists may also suggest removal because a wisdom tooth is damaging the tooth in front of it, or as part of planning for orthodontic treatment.

If an extraction is likely to be complicated, your dentist may refer you to an oral and maxillofacial surgeon. In that case you may have the option of being asleep for the surgery rather than having local anaesthetic alone in the chair. You can read more about oral and maxillofacial surgery on our website.

What are the more serious reasons for removal?

Pericoronitis

Pericoronitis is a mild to moderate inflammatory response of the gum around a partly erupted wisdom tooth. A flap of gum can cover part of the tooth. Food and bacteria can become trapped under the flap, causing swelling and low-grade infection. It is most common with lower wisdom teeth. If a wisdom tooth has had acute or recurring pericoronitis, removal is usually considered.

Tooth decay

Wisdom teeth are hard to clean, so decay is common. If a wisdom tooth has extensive decay and is difficult to restore, we generally advise extraction.

Infection

Pericoronitis or decay can cause the living pulp in the centre of the tooth to die. This can lead to an infection that stays local or spreads to nearby tissues. If an infection spreads quickly it can become serious, so it is important to have swelling or severe pain assessed promptly.

What other reasons are there for wisdom tooth extraction?

Other situations in which a dentist may recommend removal include:

a fractured tooth

a gum infection that makes it hard to chew or open your mouth

decay in the wisdom tooth

an impacted tooth pressing on other teeth, which can contribute to wear or damage on those teeth

a cyst around the wisdom tooth, which if left alone can damage the surrounding bone

teeth held in place by bone or other teeth so they cannot come through

as part of an orthodontic or jaw surgery treatment plan

as a precaution for some patients at higher risk of infection elsewhere in the body, such as people with certain heart conditions, on the advice of their medical team

to help with fitting a denture

How can I plan for an informed decision?

A useful first step is to tell us about your concern, your symptoms, how long you have had them and what you hope to achieve when you book. Bring relevant medical information and a current list of your medicines.

Your dentist can then assess your teeth, gums, bite and surrounding tissues, request imaging where it is clinically appropriate, and explain which options suit you. It helps to ask what the recommended approach is intended to achieve, whether there are reasonable alternatives, what preparation and aftercare involve, and what risks or limitations apply.

Treatment time, fees, recovery and maintenance vary with your diagnosis and the complexity of care. A written treatment plan lets you compare stages, expected appointments and payment arrangements before you proceed. We quote before treatment starts, and our interest-free payment plans can help spread the cost.

Call 000 immediately for uncontrollable bleeding, difficulty breathing or swallowing, a serious facial injury or any other life-threatening symptom. For severe tooth pain or swelling without these emergency signs, contact us promptly. Our emergency dentistry team reserves emergency appointments where possible.

How can we help?

Our team of dentists can examine your wisdom teeth at any of our nine Core Dental clinics. You can read about wisdom tooth extraction and general tooth extraction , or learn what to expect at your first Core Dental appointment . Call 13 13 16 or book online.

Frequently asked questions

Do wisdom teeth always need to come out?

No. Wisdom teeth that are healthy, fully functional, easy to clean and not affecting neighbouring teeth often can stay in place. Your dentist will examine you, review your X-rays and tell you whether monitoring or removal is more suitable for your situation.

Can wisdom teeth cause problems without pain?

Yes. It is common to have no symptoms until decay or infection is advanced, which is why X-rays and regular check-ups are useful. A tooth that is impacted or hard to clean can be a problem even when it feels comfortable.

What is an impacted wisdom tooth?

An impacted wisdom tooth does not have enough room to come through properly. It may grow sideways, stay partly under the gum or be blocked by bone or the tooth next to it. Impaction can lead to infection, decay or damage to nearby teeth.

Will I need to see a surgeon to have a wisdom tooth removed?

Not always. Straightforward extractions can often be done by a general dentist. If your X-rays suggest the extraction may be complicated, your dentist may refer you to an oral and maxillofacial surgeon, and sleep options may be discussed.

When should I seek urgent help for wisdom tooth pain?

Seek help promptly for severe pain, facial swelling, fever or difficulty opening your mouth. Call 000 if you have uncontrolled bleeding or trouble breathing or swallowing. Otherwise, contact us and we will arrange an appointment as soon as we can.

Related services and further reading

Wisdom tooth extraction

General tooth extraction

Emergency dentistry

Oral and maxillofacial surgery

Costs involved with wisdom tooth removal

Wisdom teeth pain: what causes it

Recovering after wisdom tooth extraction

What is involved in a tooth extraction

How do I know if I need a filling?

Core Dental at a glance

Nine Core Dental clinics across Melbourne: Southbank, South Melbourne, Caroline Springs, Carrum Downs, Epping, Wyndham, Berwick, Bayside and Glenferrie.

Open six days a week: Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm and Saturday mornings.

Interest-free payment plans and HICAPS on-site claiming.

Call 13 13 16 or book online.

Contact Core Dental

Phone	13 13 16
Booking	Online through coredental.com.au, or call 13 13 16
Hours	Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm, Saturday 8.00am to 1.30pm (Bayside Saturday 8.30am to 1.30pm), Sunday closed
Clinics	Southbank , South Melbourne , Caroline Springs , Carrum Downs , Epping , Wyndham , Berwick , Bayside , Glenferrie

This article is general in nature and does not replace advice from a registered dental practitioner who has examined you. Results, recovery times and potential risks vary for each individual. This information is intended for people over 18. Seek advice from a qualified, AHPRA-registered practitioner before proceeding.

How does a dentist work out whether wisdom teeth need removing?

At Core Dental our dentists review your dental and medical history, examine your mouth and usually recommend an X-ray to see the position and angle of each wisdom tooth. Any recommendation to remove or monitor a tooth is based on that assessment.

Which symptoms suggest a wisdom tooth problem?

Pain or tenderness at the back of the mouth, swollen or red gums, difficulty chewing or opening the mouth, a persistent bad taste, bad breath, sore lymph nodes or fever can all point to a problem. Core Dental can examine you to find the cause.

What is pericoronitis?

Pericoronitis is inflammation of the gum around a partly erupted wisdom tooth. Food and bacteria can collect under a flap of gum, causing swelling and low-grade infection. Dentists at Core Dental commonly consider removal when it keeps coming back.

When might Core Dental advise leaving wisdom teeth in place?

We generally advise monitoring rather than removal when wisdom teeth and their neighbours are healthy, fully functional, easy to clean and not causing crowding, or when extraction would carry a high risk of nerve injury.

Does age affect wisdom tooth removal?

Removal in younger adults is generally associated with less pain and swelling afterwards than removal later in life. Our Core Dental dentists consider your age, X-rays and health together, so age alone does not decide whether a tooth comes out.

Who removes complicated wisdom teeth for Core Dental patients?

Straightforward extractions can often be carried out by a Core Dental general dentist. If your X-rays suggest a complex extraction, your dentist may refer you to an oral and maxillofacial surgeon, where sleep options may also be discussed.

How do I book a wisdom tooth check at Core Dental?

Call Core Dental on 13 13 16 or book online through coredental.com.au. Tell our team about your symptoms and bring your medical information and medicines list so your dentist can plan an examination and any imaging.

What should I do about severe swelling at the back of my mouth?

Contact Core Dental promptly on 13 13 16 for severe pain or swelling, and we will arrange an emergency appointment where possible. Call 000 if you have uncontrollable bleeding or difficulty breathing or swallowing.