Wisdom Tooth Extraction Recovery Time | Core Dental

Canonical: https://www.coredental.com.au/recover-wisdom-tooth-extraction/

Details:

Recovery depends on how complex the extraction was. After a simple removal many people feel back to normal the next day, while a more complex extraction can take up to a week. Broadly, it can take four to seven days to recover, and some symptoms may take up to two weeks to settle fully. At Core Dental our dentists explain what to expect and how to look after the site, because healing varies from person to person.

How long does recovery from wisdom tooth removal take?

Recovery time depends on the complexity of the case. If the removal was simple, you may be back to normal the next day. If the extraction was more complex, recovery could take up to a week. Broadly, it can take four to seven days to recover from wisdom tooth extraction, although some symptoms can take up to two weeks to resolve fully. Your dentist can give you a clearer idea after examining your teeth and any imaging, because the position of the tooth, how deeply it sits and its roots all affect the procedure. You can read about what is involved in a tooth extraction procedure and our wisdom tooth extraction service .

Is numbness normal after wisdom tooth extraction?

Yes. You may still be numb from the local anaesthetic for several hours after surgery, so be careful not to bite your lip, cheek or tongue while the feeling returns. Sometimes numbness can last for an extended period. If it does, tell your dentist or surgeon, who will monitor it with you.

When does swelling peak, and how can you manage it?

Swelling usually peaks two to three days after surgery and begins to settle after four to five days. The amount of swelling depends on how difficult the extractions were. An ice pack held against the outside of your face can help reduce it.

What can you do about discomfort after wisdom tooth extraction?

Some discomfort is expected after surgery. Pain medication can help, and your dentist may prescribe painkillers to take as required. Avoid aspirin unless your dentist advises otherwise, because it can increase bleeding. If you are unsure which medication suits you, please ask us before your procedure.

Is bleeding normal, and what should you do about it?

A small amount of bleeding from the surgical site is normal. You will be given gauze packs to bite down on so you can apply direct pressure. If the bleeding is persistent or you are worried, contact your dentist or surgeon.

What can you do to support your recovery?

There are some things you can do to help your recovery go smoothly. Our dentists will give you instructions that suit your situation, and these general tips are a guide:

Avoid smoking and alcohol for at least 48 hours after surgery. Otherwise you may increase the chance of dry socket, a delay in healing of the site that can cause significant pain and discomfort. Our article on how smoking affects your oral health has more detail.

Try a liquid diet such as soup and smoothies for the first couple of days. Avoid hard or crunchy foods to protect the surgical site, and limit hot foods because they can increase bleeding.

Do not use a straw for 48 hours. Drinking through a straw can disturb the blood clot that forms at the extraction site and delay healing.

Avoid strenuous activity for the first two to three days.

Use an ice pack on the sides of your face to ease discomfort and swelling. Apply it for 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off during the first 24 hours.

Use saltwater mouth rinses after the first 24 hours to help keep the surgical site clean. Our article on salt water and mouthwash explains more.

Sleep with your head slightly elevated to help limit bleeding.

Rest as much as you can for the first two or three days, because movement can increase blood flow.

Change your dressings or mouth pads regularly to keep the area clean and soak up excess blood.

If you have any questions, difficulties or concerns after your surgery, please contact your dentist or surgeon, who can advise you.

When should you contact your dentist after wisdom tooth removal?

Please get in touch with your dentist or surgeon if bleeding does not stop with pressure, if your pain is getting worse instead of settling after the first few days, if swelling keeps increasing, or if numbness lasts longer than expected. At Core Dental we reserve emergency appointments where possible. If you have a fever, trouble breathing or swallowing, or swelling that spreads, seek urgent care, and call 000 in an emergency.

How can you plan your care and make an informed decision?

A useful first step is to tell us about your concern, symptoms, timing and goals when you book. Bring relevant medical information and a list of your current medicines. Our team can then assess your teeth, gums, bite and surrounding tissues, request imaging where it is clinically appropriate, and explain which options suit you.

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 the diagnosis and the complexity of care. At Core Dental we quote before treatment starts, and a written treatment plan can help you compare stages, expected appointments and payment arrangements before you proceed.

Call 000 immediately for uncontrollable bleeding, breathing or swallowing difficulty, serious facial injury or other life-threatening symptoms. Do not wait for a dental appointment in these situations. For severe tooth pain or swelling without these emergency signs, contact your dental practice promptly. For routine care, prevention and review intervals should be tailored to your individual oral health risks rather than assumed to be the same for everyone.

How can we help?

If you are having problems with a wisdom tooth, or you have just had one removed and have questions, our team can help at any of our nine Core Dental clinics across Melbourne. Call 13 13 16 or book online. You can also read about the costs involved with wisdom tooth removal and how you will know if you need your wisdom teeth removed .

The published aftercare list, including the things not to do

There is an official aftercare list for wisdom tooth removal, and the instructions that matter most are the prohibitions — because each one is protecting the same thing.

The Victorian Department of Health's aftercare items, verbatim:

"Take pain-relieving medication if needed (and on advice from your oral health professional)."

"Bite on the gauze to help stop bleeding"

"Avoid excessive rinsing, sucking through a straw or spitting as that can cause the blot clot to not form, or come loose."

"Hold warm salty water in your mouth. Do this after meals and no earlier than 24 hours after surgery."

"Eat soft, easy-to-chew foods for the next few days to keep the area clean from food particles."

"Don't smoke for 48 hours after the surgery."

"Avoid alcohol and excessive physical activity."

The three prohibitions in that third item are all about one thing: the clot. Rinsing hard, drinking through a straw and spitting each disturb it, and the Department groups them for that reason. (The source has a typo there — it writes "blot clot" where it means the blood clot.)

The salt water instruction has a time condition attached. "No earlier than 24 hours after surgery", and after meals. Starting it the same evening works against the clot you are trying to protect.

Two numbers to note. No smoking for 48 hours. Salt water no earlier than 24 hours. Both are the Department's own.

What is normal afterwards. "It is normal for your jaw and gum to be sore, swollen and bleed a little for a few days after having a wisdom tooth out."

Sore, swollen and a little bleeding, for a few days. That is the published baseline against which to judge anything worse.

Sources: Better Health Channel (Victorian Department of Health), Wisdom teeth, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (the page states its review date as 3 June 2022). Accessed 6 November 2026.

Dry socket, infection, and what the anaesthetic means for your day

Two complications are described in the published advice, and one practical matter about getting home is easy to overlook.

Dry socket. "One possible complication of wisdom teeth removal is a dry socket (alveolar osteitis), when the area where the tooth came from doesn't heal properly causing severe pain and a bad smell from the area. This happens more often in people who smoke or have difficulty in healing. Dry socket can be successfully treated by your oral health professional."

Three useful things there. The signs are severe pain and a bad smell — distinct from the normal soreness above. Smoking raises the risk, which is why the 48-hour rule exists. And it "can be successfully treated", so it is a reason to come back rather than to endure.

The Department's separate smoking advice reinforces the first point: people who smoke or vape "are more likely to get infections and do not heal as well as non-smokers/non-vapers", and its list of common problems includes "poor healing after tooth removal (known as dry socket)" and "poor healing after mouth and gum surgery".

Signs of infection around a wisdom tooth , which the Department lists for gum infection (pericoronitis): "red, inflamed gum near the wisdom tooth"; "facial swelling"; "pain and sensitivity"; "pus coming from the gum"; "swollen and sore lymph nodes underneath the jaw"; "difficulty opening the mouth and swallowing"; "fever"; "food getting stuck and difficult to clean out"; "bad breath".

Fever, difficulty swallowing and swollen lymph nodes are different in kind from local soreness.

On the anaesthetic you had, and what follows. "If your wisdom teeth need to be taken out, all you may need is a local anaesthetic so you won't feel it. If your wisdom teeth are deeply impacted (blocked from coming through) and difficult to remove, or for other medical reasons, you may be offered a general anaesthetic. Sometimes this can be done with nitrous oxide (also known as happy gas) to make it more comfortable."

A local anaesthetic is "injected into the immediate area to be operated on. For example, your dentist may inject local anaesthetic into your gum before removing a tooth."

If you had a general anaesthetic, there are published instructions about driving. "If you are permitted to leave hospital within hours of the surgery, don't try to drive home because your coordination may be affected by the medication." And: "Don't drive a car within 24 hours after the procedure."

Twenty-four hours, not until you feel alright. That is the published instruction.

On the risk, the Department's statement is unquantified and we are leaving it that way: "Complications from general anaesthetic are rare." That page states its own review date as 30 September 2012, so no figure from it belongs on a current page.

For context on who administers one: "A qualified anaesthetist, who is a medical doctor with specialist training in anaesthetics, administers the general anaesthetic", and "the anaesthetist controls the length of time you are asleep, and constantly monitors your pulse, breathing and blood pressure." You should also expect an assessment first — "your anaesthetist will visit you before you go to theatre to assess if you are fit enough for surgery" — and "usually you will be asked not to drink or eat for several hours before the operation".

Who removes wisdom teeth. "Wisdom teeth can be removed by a dentist, but may also need to be referred to an oral maxillofacial surgeon who has done additional training and study in surgery or the teeth, bones, jaws and face."

Sources: Better Health Channel (Victorian Department of Health), Wisdom teeth, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (the page states its review date as 3 June 2022); General anaesthetics, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (the page states its review date as 30 September 2012); Effects of smoking and vaping on oral health, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 24 September 2025). All accessed 6 November 2026.

Frequently asked questions

How soon can I eat normally after wisdom tooth removal?

Start with liquids such as soup and smoothies for the first couple of days, and avoid hard or crunchy foods. Move back to your usual diet as comfort allows, and follow the advice your dentist gives you.

Why can't I use a straw after a wisdom tooth extraction?

Drinking through a straw can disturb the blood clot that forms in the socket, and that clot is part of normal healing. Avoid straws for 48 hours.

What is dry socket?

Dry socket is a delay in healing at the extraction site that can cause significant pain and discomfort. Avoiding smoking and alcohol for at least 48 hours and not using a straw may reduce the chance of it happening. Contact us if you are worried.

When can I go back to work or exercise?

Many people feel back to normal after a simple removal within a day, while a complex extraction can take up to a week. Avoid strenuous activity for the first two to three days, and ask your dentist what suits you.

Can I take aspirin for pain after surgery?

Avoid aspirin unless your dentist advises otherwise, because it can increase bleeding. Pain medication and prescribed painkillers can be used as directed. Please ask us if you are unsure.

What is normal in the days after a wisdom tooth comes out?

The Victorian Department of Health: "It is normal for your jaw and gum to be sore, swollen and bleed a little for a few days after having a wisdom tooth out."

Why am I told not to use a straw?

To protect the clot. The Department groups three things together: "Avoid excessive rinsing, sucking through a straw or spitting as that can cause the blot clot to not form, or come loose." (The source has a typo there; it means the blood clot.)

When can I start rinsing with salt water?

Not straight away. "Hold warm salty water in your mouth. Do this after meals and no earlier than 24 hours after surgery."

How long should I avoid smoking?

"Don't smoke for 48 hours after the surgery." Smoking also raises the risk of dry socket, and the Department notes that people who smoke or vape "do not heal as well as non-smokers/non-vapers".

What should I eat?

"Eat soft, easy-to-chew foods for the next few days to keep the area clean from food particles." The Department also says to "avoid alcohol and excessive physical activity".

How does the Department describe dry socket?

"One possible complication of wisdom teeth removal is a dry socket (alveolar osteitis), when the area where the tooth came from doesn't heal properly causing severe pain and a bad smell from the area." It

"happens more often in people who smoke or have difficulty in healing", and "can be successfully treated by your oral health professional".

How do I tell dry socket from normal soreness?

The published signs are severe pain and a bad smell from the area — different in kind from the soreness, swelling and slight bleeding the Department calls normal.

What are the signs of an infection?

The Department's list for gum infection around a wisdom tooth: "red, inflamed gum near the wisdom tooth"; "facial swelling"; "pain and sensitivity"; "pus coming from the gum"; "swollen and sore lymph nodes underneath the jaw"; "difficulty opening the mouth and swallowing"; "fever"; "food getting stuck and difficult to clean out"; "bad breath".

Can I drive home?

Not after a general anaesthetic. "If you are permitted to leave hospital within hours of the surgery, don't try to drive home because your coordination may be affected by the medication", and "don't drive a car within 24 hours after the procedure".

What anaesthetic is used?

"All you may need is a local anaesthetic so you won't feel it." Where teeth are "deeply impacted (blocked from coming through) and difficult to remove, or for other medical reasons, you may be offered a general anaesthetic", sometimes with nitrous oxide, "also known as happy gas".

Who administers a general anaesthetic?

"A qualified anaesthetist, who is a medical doctor with specialist training in anaesthetics." They "control the length of time you are asleep", monitor "your pulse, breathing and blood pressure", and will "visit you before you go to theatre to assess if you are fit enough for surgery".

Who removes wisdom teeth?

"Wisdom teeth can be removed by a dentist, but may also need to be referred to an oral maxillofacial surgeon who has done additional training and study in surgery or the teeth, bones, jaws and face."

Related services and further reading

Wisdom tooth extraction

General tooth extraction

Costs involved with wisdom tooth removal

How will I know if I need my wisdom teeth removed?

What is involved in a tooth extraction procedure?

Recovery following teeth extractions

What causes wisdom teeth pain?

Emergency dentistry

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 8.30am to 1.30pm), Sunday closed
Clinics	Southbank , South Melbourne , Caroline Springs , Carrum Downs , Epping , Wyndham , Berwick , Bayside , Glenferrie

Results, recovery times and potential risks vary for each individual. This information is general in nature and is intended for people over 18. Seek advice from a qualified, AHPRA-registered practitioner before proceeding.

How long does wisdom tooth recovery usually take?

Broadly, recovery can take four to seven days, with some symptoms taking up to two weeks to settle. After a simple removal many people feel back to normal the next day. Our dentists at Core Dental explain what to expect for your case.

When does swelling peak after wisdom tooth removal?

Swelling usually peaks two to three days after surgery and starts to settle after four to five days. An ice pack on the outside of the face can help. Contact Core Dental if swelling keeps increasing.

Why should smoking and alcohol be avoided after extraction?

Avoiding smoking and alcohol for at least 48 hours may reduce the chance of dry socket, a delay in healing that can cause significant pain. Our Core Dental team gives aftercare advice suited to your treatment.

How should I use ice after wisdom tooth removal?

Apply an ice pack to the sides of the face for 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off during the first 24 hours to ease discomfort and swelling. Core Dental dentists can adjust this advice for your situation.

What aftercare helps healing at the extraction site?

General advice includes liquids first, no straw for 48 hours, avoiding strenuous activity for two to three days, saltwater rinses after 24 hours, and sleeping with your head slightly raised. Core Dental will confirm what suits you.

Where can I have a wisdom tooth removed at Core Dental?

Wisdom tooth extraction is available through Core Dental general dentistry. Call 13 13 16 or book online to arrange an assessment at one of our nine Melbourne clinics, so we can confirm the options available at your preferred clinic.

What should I do if bleeding continues after extraction?

Bite firmly on the gauze pack to apply direct pressure. If bleeding is persistent or you are worried, contact your dentist or surgeon, or Core Dental on 13 13 16. Call 000 for an emergency.

What are Core Dental opening hours?

Core Dental clinics are open Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm and Saturday 8.00am to 1.30pm, with Bayside opening on Saturdays from 8.30am. Clinics are closed on Sunday.