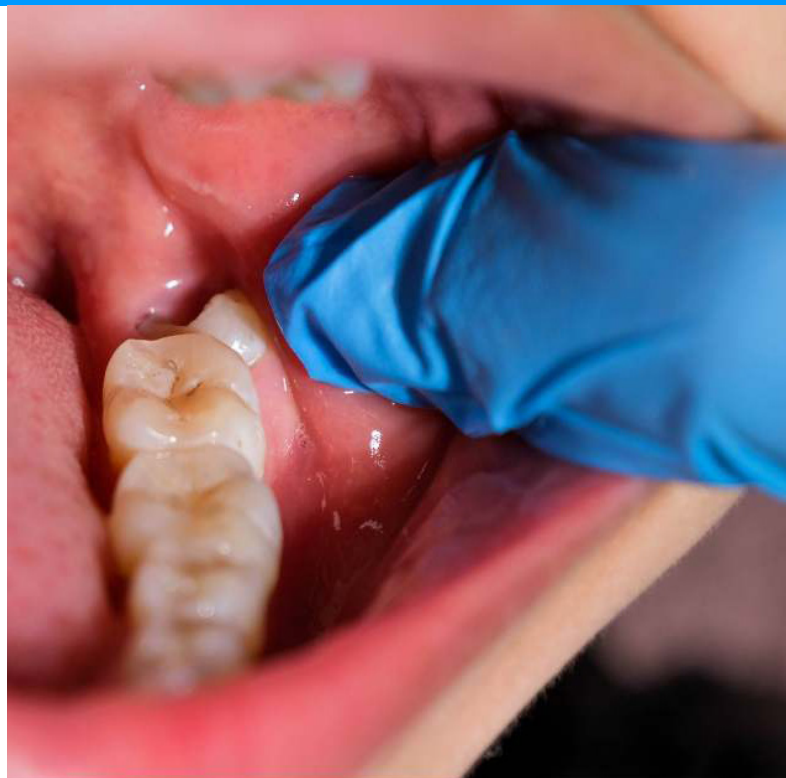


## Wisdom Teeth

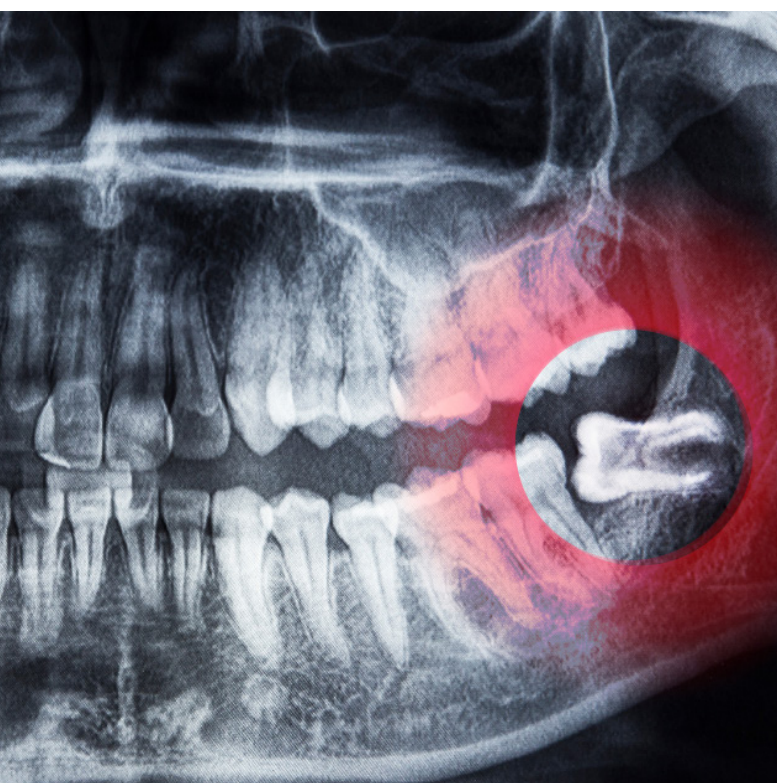
Wisdom teeth are the last of our teeth to emerge as we mature into adulthood, hence the name 'wisdom teeth', and are the dreaded rite of passage we have to endure. They can potentially cause oral health concerns if not managed correctly. Extreme cases of impacted wisdom teeth may require removal. But why does this happen, and how do we know if our wisdom teeth necessitate extraction?



### What are wisdom teeth, and why do we have them?

Current theories suggest that our ancestors had larger jaw structures and once needed a third set of molars to help break down tough and hard-to-chew plants and roots. Humans

evolved to develop larger brains and smaller jaw structures as they diversified and spread across the world. They became more efficient at gathering and hunting food. Wisdom teeth slowly became redundant as the human diet changed. Especially since agriculture, the foods we consume today are soft in comparison and require less effort to break down.



### How do wisdom teeth become impacted?

The smaller jaw structure of modern humans has resulted in less space for the third set of molars (wisdom teeth) to grow into the correct alignment. This lack of space can result in wisdom teeth growing at an odd angle into the second set of molars. The wisdom teeth become impacted between tooth and bone. Impacted wisdom teeth sometimes grow sideways into the gum and occasionally only partially erupt or even stay buried under the gum line. Oral Health professionals refer to this as - Impacted Wisdom Teeth.

### Potential Issues, Risks, and Complications.

Impacted wisdom teeth can cause pain, tight jaw muscles, inflammation, tooth decay, infection, or generally feeling unwell. Wisdom teeth can be hard to clean as they are so far back in the jaw and hard to reach. When a wisdom tooth becomes - impacted - the amount of space is reduced making it even more difficult to remove food and bacteria from the wisdom tooth and adjacent molars. The risk of tooth decay and infection increases when this occurs.

### Why are Impacted Wisdom Teeth Removed?

Most of the time, people will suffer short periods of mild discomfort as the wisdom teeth erupt through the gums. The best treatment is to be mindful and thorough with oral hygiene to avoid the increased risk of tooth decay or infection.

There is a common misconception that impacted wisdom teeth are the sole cause of overcrowding in the mouth. Crowding of the front teeth is due to many complex factors. The wisdom teeth play some role, and people who have had their wisdom teeth removed can still suffer from overcrowding of the front teeth.

Some people may require wisdom teeth extraction to avoid potential dental problems.

Your dentist or orthodontist will examine your wisdom teeth with an X-ray to assess if they are erupting into their correct alignment and if there is enough space for this to occur. These two factors will determine if there is a need for wisdom tooth extraction.



### Wisdom teeth management

Regular Dental check-ups are integral in monitoring the eruption of your wisdom teeth. Dentists will examine X-rays of your whole mouth structure to assess if any preventive measures are required. Diligent oral hygiene and some pain management are generally all that's needed to reduce the risk of tooth decay and gum disease as wisdom teeth emerge.

If your wisdom teeth are - impacted - your dentist may suggest dental treatment is necessary to avoid potential problems. The jaw contains many nerves and blood vessels, and the removal of wisdom teeth can become complex. Dentists may refer patients to a specialist maxillofacial surgeon.