

# Wisdom Teeth

## Overview

Dentists want to help their patients achieve optimal oral health throughout their lives. Regular dental visits are an important part of your overall health care.

As part of a dental visit, your dentist will examine you to determine if your wisdom teeth are healthy and properly positioned. Based on the condition of your mouth, your dentist may recommend removal of any of your wisdom teeth or refer you to a specialist such as an oral surgeon to evaluate their condition and provide appropriate treatment.

Every patient is unique, but in general, wisdom teeth may need to be removed when there is evidence of changes in the mouth such as:

- pain
- infection
- cysts
- tumors
- damage to adjacent teeth
- gum disease
- tooth decay (if it is not possible or desirable to restore the tooth)

Your dentist or specialist may also recommend removal of teeth to prevent problems or for other reasons, such as when removal is part of an orthodontic, restorative or periodontal treatment plan. In addition, the condition of your mouth changes over time. Wisdom teeth that are not removed should continue to be monitored, because the potential for developing problems later on still exists. As with many other health conditions, as people age, they are at greater risk for health problems and that includes potential problems with their wisdom teeth.

It is important for patients to know that they should always feel free to discuss treatment recommendations with their dentists, particularly if they do not understand or are unsure about the recommended treatment.

Your dentist can explain why a particular course of treatment is recommended and prioritize a treatment schedule to help you distinguish between conditions that need immediate attention and those that are less urgent. If you have talked with your dentist and still are uncertain about what to do, you may want to consider getting a second opinion.

Regular dental visits are important so your dentist can evaluate not just your wisdom teeth but your overall oral health to help you prevent and manage dental disease and achieve optimal oral health.