



WISDOM TEETH

Between the ages of 17 and 21, your third molars, called “wisdom teeth,” appear at the very back of your upper and lower rows of teeth. When wisdom teeth come in, there is usually some redness, swelling, and discomfort or pain.

Healthy wisdom teeth can help you chew when they come in correctly, but they can lead to problems if there is not enough space for them or they are in the wrong position. When your wisdom teeth are coming in, your dentist will observe their position and will check the gums for signs of infection.

Deciding if wisdom teeth should stay or go

Your dentist will examine your mouth and take an x-ray to determine whether your wisdom teeth should be kept or removed. Wisdom teeth may need to be removed if they cause pain, infection, cysts, tumors, damage to your neighboring teeth, gum disease, or tooth decay without chance of restoring the tooth.

If the wisdom teeth are impacted (trapped in your jaw or under your gums), your dentist will likely recommend removal. An impacted wisdom tooth can form a cyst, a sack-like inflammation in your gums. Dental cysts can damage the roots of nearby teeth or destroy the bone that supports your teeth.

Wisdom teeth may be removed as part of treatment for braces or other dental care. To prevent cavities, wisdom teeth need to be in the right position to prevent food from becoming trapped and you need to be able to clean between them and your molars. Wisdom teeth should not crowd or damage your other teeth.

Wisdom teeth that are kept should be examined regularly as you age. Maintain good oral hygiene, make sure to reach your toothbrush back to where your wisdom teeth are, and don't forget to floss around them, too. Visit your dentist at least twice yearly for dental cleanings, and more often if needed.

For more information

For more information, contact the Division of Public Health, Bureau of Oral Health and Dental Services, at 302-622-4540 and www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/hsm/ohphome.html.

Resources

1. American Dental Association. 2020. *Wisdom Teeth*. In Mouth Healthy. Retrieved July 17, 2020 from <https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/w/wisdom-teeth>

24/7 Emergency Contact Number: 1-888-295-5156

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