



## **CLIENT CARE INFORMATION SHEETS**

### **IMPACTED WISDOM TEETH**

Most people have four wisdom teeth, two in the upper jaw and two in the lower jaw. It is not uncommon for these teeth to become impacted. An impacted tooth is one which has not grown through the gum into the mouth – or has grown only part way through and is in an abnormal position. This is an unhealthy situation and the tooth should be removed for a number of reasons.

- Infection may develop under the gum lying over the tooth.
- The impacted tooth may damage the tooth beside it.
- It may cause crowding of the front teeth.
- It may change the normal bite relationship of the upper and lower teeth.
- It can make an area of weakness, which may result in the jaw breaking following a blow to the face during contact sport or falling.
- Should the tooth fail to erupt, a sac called a cyst may form and, by gradual enlargement, endanger the health of nearby bone and teeth.

These problems can be prevented by the timely surgical removal of the tooth.

Removal of wisdom teeth usually requires an incision in the gum to expose the tooth. Sometimes some of the surrounding bone must be removed with a dental drill, or the tooth may be cut into pieces to assist in its removal. The area from which it has been removed, is cleansed thoroughly and stitches are placed to restore the normal contour of the gum and to keep food out of the socket. The stitches will be left in place for about a week.

#### **Sedation:**

Oral sedation (tablets), IV sedation (intravenous injection) or nitrous oxide (happy gas) can be given to you to help make the treatment as pleasant and worry-free as possible. A strong and long lasting (6-8 hours) local anaesthetic is used to ensure that the operation is not uncomfortable.

#### **Side Effects:**

As with all operations there are side effects associated with this surgery. After the surgery there will be some discomfort, and for about a week some bruising, swelling and difficulty opening your mouth is probable. Occasionally there may be bleeding or post-operative infection which may require additional treatment.

Damage to the adjacent teeth and fillings can occur but rarely results in the loss of additional teeth.

Sometimes a decision is made to leave a small piece of root behind in the jaw when its removal does not justify the more extensive surgery necessary. An opening from the mouth into the sinus in the cheekbone may result if upper wisdom teeth are removed, which may require additional surgery.

### **Numbness or Altered Sensation:**

An impacted wisdom tooth may be close to nerves. Sometimes, the impacted wisdom tooth may be touching a major nerve. When the tooth is removed, the nerve may become bruised. Also the nerve to the tongue can be stretched. Damage to these nerves can occasionally cause numbness, tingling and loss of feeling in the teeth, gums, cheeks, lips, chin, tongue and around the upper jaw and lower jaw. If a nerve is injured, it usually will heal. As it heals, the numbness and tingling go away. Often this takes less than four weeks. In some people, complete healing of the nerve may take 6 to 18 months. In rare cases, the nerve may not heal completely, and numbness or altered sensation may be permanent.

After your operation you will be given written instructions and advice on home care, which you are asked to follow. If possible arrange for a day's rest for the day following your surgery, and since a soft diet will be recommended for a few days after your surgery, have at home foodstuffs such as soup, eggs for scrambling, stewed fruit and vegetables suitable for mashing.

Provided you follow the instructions and seek advice and treatment should anything concern you, you should anticipate a reasonably quick and comfortable recovery.