

Knowing The Facts About Wisdom Teeth Extraction

~ BY MARK E. BUFALINI, DMD, MD ~

The extraction of wisdom teeth or third molars is a common procedure at COFSC, performed daily in our offices with very few complications.

Wisdom teeth usually erupt between the ages of 17 and 25, a time that has been called the "Age of Wisdom." Over time, the need for third molars has decreased, due to factors such as softer diets, orthodontics, improved hygiene and loss of fewer teeth. These factors create a lack of sufficient space in the mouth to allow the third molars to erupt into a normal position, which then leads to the impaction of wisdom teeth. When they are impacted or misaligned, wisdom teeth can become painful and lead to an infection, as well as cause damage to adjacent teeth and contribute to crowding.

Wisdom teeth can be entrapped completely within the soft tissue and/or jawbone, or they may partially break through

the gingiva. Those that only partially erupt may allow bacteria and food debris to enter the space around the teeth, which can lead to an infection or cavities in the wisdom teeth and adjacent teeth. Impacted wisdom teeth are also prone to develop a cyst in the sac from which they formed. This sac can become filled with fluid and enlarge, which can damage the jaw, adjacent teeth and nerves.

Although an impacted tooth may not be painful or visible, damage can occur without symptoms. As the teeth develop, the roots can become longer, more difficult to remove and the risk of complications can increase. Therefore, impacted wisdom teeth are more likely to cause problems as we age. Approximately 85% of wisdom teeth will eventually need to be removed.

The most common question we hear is: When is the best time to have my wisdom teeth removed? It is usually best not to wait

until your wisdom teeth start to cause problems. The American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons strongly recommends that wisdom teeth be removed by the time the patient is a young adult in order to prevent future problems and to ensure optimal healing.

Use of intravenous conscious sedation and local anesthesia are both very common and comfortable in wisdom teeth extraction. After surgery, patients may experience mild discomfort and swelling, which can be eased with ice packs, and pain medications can help manage further discomfort. Patients are also usually placed on a soft diet, to ease the strain on the jaws.

Although the extraction of wisdom teeth can be a stressful experience, the surgeons at Carolinas Oral and Facial Surgery Center have years of experience making patients comfortable during this process. We are committed to our patient's comfort and

to making this procedure as stress-free as possible.

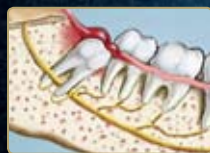
Dr. Bufalini attended dental school at the University of Pittsburgh, and completed both medical school and his residency at the University of Connecticut Health Center. He was a staff surgeon at Womack Army Medical Center in Fort Bragg, NC and an ER physician covering facial trauma at NHRMC prior to joining Carolinas Oral & Facial Surgery Center. Dr. Bufalini is board certified by the American Board of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons



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WISDOM TEETH

There's wisdom in prevention.



For most people, removing wisdom teeth also removes the potential of many other dental problems—including infections and orthodontic issues. The teenage years through the early 20's is the ideal time for the procedure. **So take a proactive approach; call us for an appointment or ask your dentist for a referral.**



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