

Wisdom Teeth

By the age of 18, the average adult has 32 teeth: 16 teeth on the top and 16 teeth on the bottom. Each tooth in the mouth has a specific name and function. The teeth in the front of the mouth (incisors, canines, and bicuspids) are ideal for grasping and biting food into smaller pieces. The back teeth (molars) are used to grind food up into a consistency suitable for swallowing.

The average mouth is large enough to hold only 28 teeth. There can be a problem when 32 teeth try to fit in a mouth that only has enough space for 28. These four other teeth are your third molars, also known as “wisdom teeth.”

Why Should I Have My Wisdom Teeth Removed?

Wisdom teeth are the last teeth to erupt within the mouth. When they align properly and gum tissue is healthy, wisdom teeth do not have to be removed. Unfortunately, this does not generally happen. The extraction of wisdom teeth is necessary when they are prevented from properly erupting within the mouth. They may grow sideways, partially emerge from the gum, and even remain trapped beneath the gum and bone. Impacted teeth can take many positions in the jaw as they attempt to find a pathway that will allow them to successfully erupt.

These poorly positioned impacted teeth can cause many problems. When they are partially erupted, the opening around the teeth allows bacteria to grow and will eventually cause an infection. The result: swelling, pain, difficulty opening and malaise. The pressure from the erupting wisdom teeth may move other teeth and disrupt the orthodontic or natural alignment of teeth. The most serious problem occurs when tumors or cysts form around the impacted wisdom teeth, resulting in the destruction of the jawbone and healthy teeth. Removal of the offending impacted teeth usually resolves these problems. Early removal is recommended to avoid such future problems and to decrease the surgical risk involved with the procedure.

Oral Examination

With an oral examination and x-rays of the mouth, Dr. Silva can evaluate the position of the wisdom teeth and determine if there are present problems or may be future problems. Studies have shown that early evaluation and treatment result in a superior outcome for the patient. Patients are generally first evaluated in the mid-teenage years by their dentist, orthodontist or by an oral and maxillofacial surgeon.

All outpatient surgery is performed under appropriate anesthesia to maximize patient comfort. Dr. Silva has the training, license and experience to provide various types of anesthesia for patients to select the best alternative.

Removal

In most cases, the removal of wisdom teeth is performed under IV anesthesia. In some case removal can be performed under local anesthesia, laughing gas (nitrous oxide/oxygen analgesia) or oral sedation. These options, as well as the surgical risks, if any, will be discussed with you before the procedure is performed. Once the teeth are removed, the gum is sutured. To control bleeding, gauze packings are placed with firm biting pressure. You will recover under our supervision in the

office until you are ready to be taken home. Upon discharge, your post-operative kit will include post-operative instructions, a prescription for pain medication, antibiotics, and a follow-up appointment in one week. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call us at 831-649-1388.