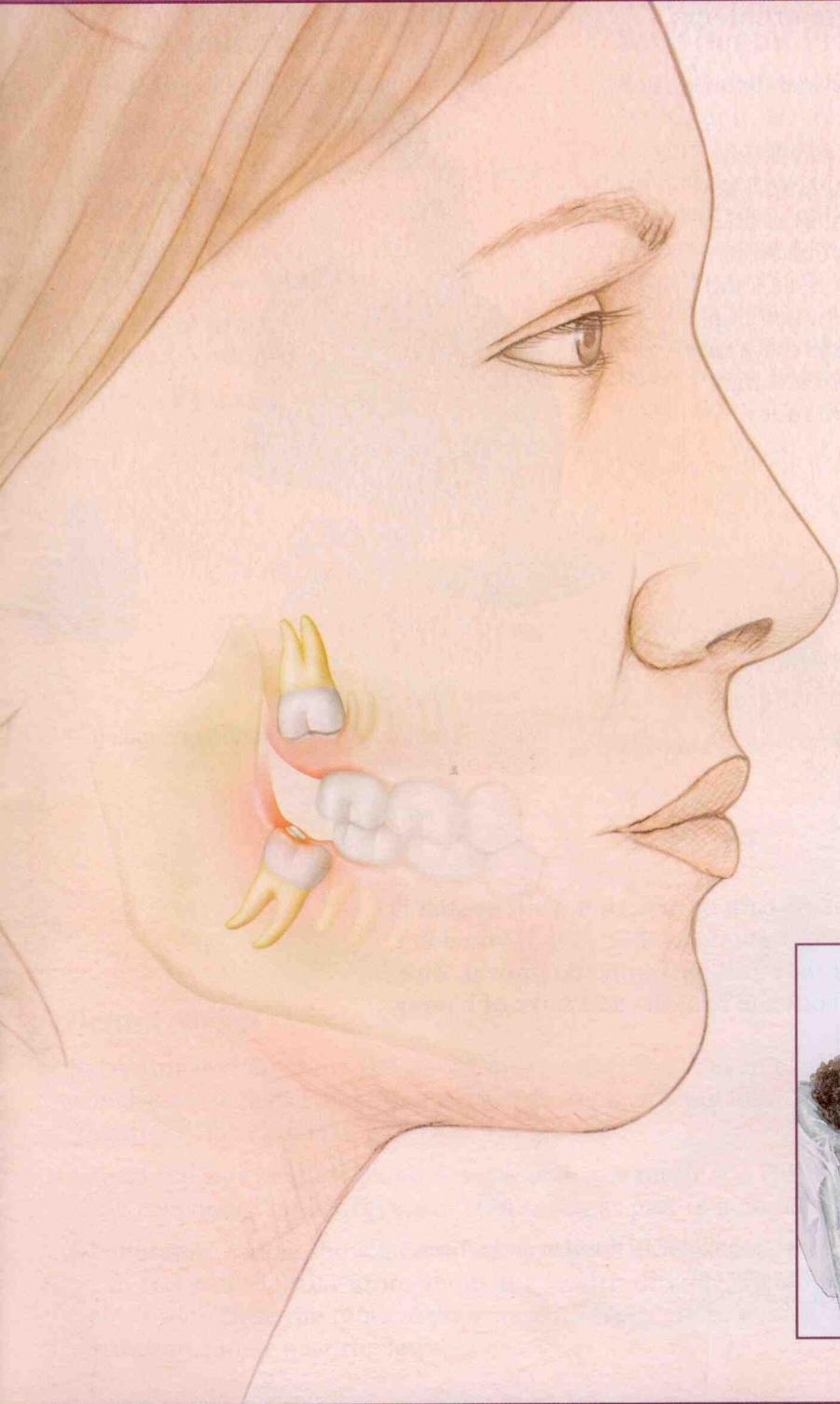


Wisdom Teeth Removal

Your Condition and Treatment



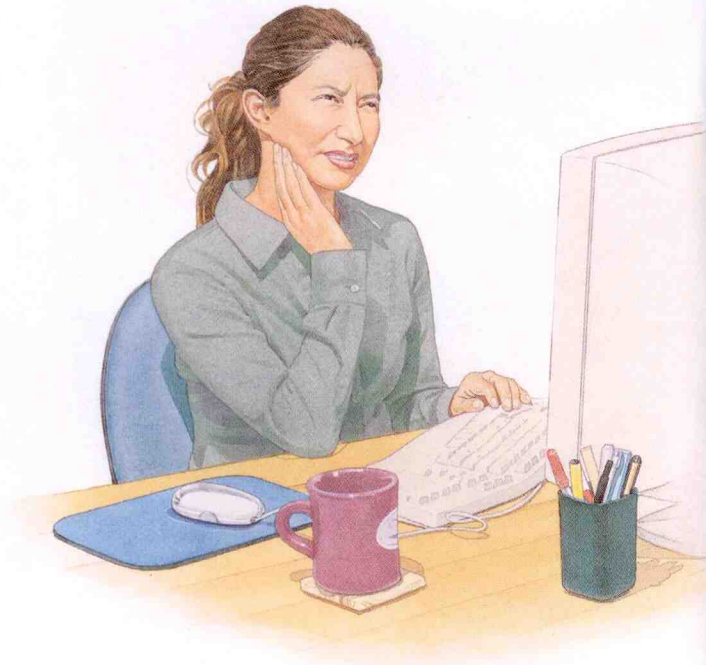
The Trouble with Wisdom Teeth

Wisdom teeth, also called third molars, are the last permanent teeth to develop. They most often **erupt** (break through the gum) during a person's late teens or twenties. Wisdom teeth are known for the dental problems they can cause. Removing the wisdom teeth can help take care of symptoms you're experiencing now. It may also prevent future problems.

What Can Go Wrong

Many people's jaws are too small for wisdom teeth to grow in properly. They often become **impacted** (unable to fully erupt). Another common problem is that wisdom teeth are hard to reach and clean. Complications may not develop until years after the teeth first erupt or become impacted. Problems that may occur now or in the future include:

- Pain
- Infection
- Gum disease
- Decay in the wisdom teeth and nearby teeth
- Crowding of nearby teeth, which can push them out of alignment
- Interference with certain kinds of dental or orthodontic work



Wisdom teeth can cause sudden or ongoing dental or jaw pain.

Choosing Removal

If your wisdom teeth are causing pain or infection, your dentist is likely to advise removing them right away. But even if you don't have symptoms, your dentist may still recommend removal. This booklet can tell you more about the benefits and risks of having your wisdom teeth removed.

This booklet is not intended as a substitute for professional dental or medical care.
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Your Dental Evaluation

Before suggesting that you have your wisdom teeth removed, your dentist will do a thorough evaluation. This includes an exam and x-rays of your teeth and jaws. Your dentist may refer you to a specialist for further evaluation and for the surgery.

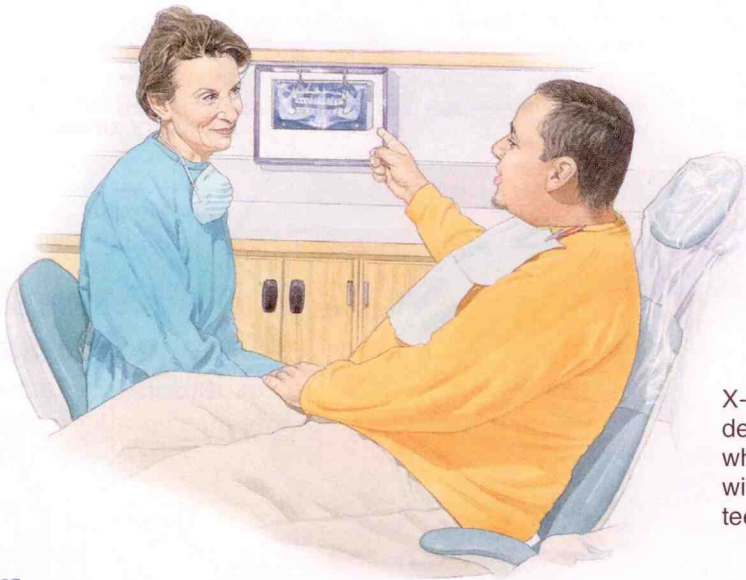
Your Examination

Your dental exam includes:

- A review of your dental history
- Questions about any medical problems that could affect treatment
- An exam of your teeth and gums to assess your oral health
- An exam of the visible parts (if any) of your wisdom teeth
- A check for signs of infection, such as swelling or tenderness

Your Dental Professionals

Your **general dentist** will most likely do the first evaluation. He or she may also perform the surgery to remove your wisdom teeth. Or your general dentist may refer you to an **oral surgeon** (also called an oral and maxillofacial surgeon). An oral surgeon is a dentist who specializes in surgery of the mouth and jaw, such as wisdom tooth removal. He or she may conduct further evaluation before the surgery. This booklet refers to the person who extracts the wisdom teeth, no matter the specialty, as a "surgeon."



X-rays can help your dentist determine whether problems with your wisdom teeth are likely.

Dental X-rays

X-ray images can show the positions of teeth that haven't fully erupted. They can also show decay and other problems, such as bone loss. This helps plan your treatment. Two kinds of dental x-rays are used:

- **Intraoral x-rays** show small images of 3 to 6 teeth at a time, plus a portion of the jawbone. These x-rays are often taken as part of a dental checkup.
- **Panoramic x-rays** show a complete image of all the teeth and both jaws. They can tell your dentist more about the health of your jawbones. They can also show how close the roots of your wisdom teeth are to nerves, arteries, and other structures in or near the jaws.

