

QUESTIONS ABOUT IMPACTED TEETH

WHAT IS AN IMPACTED TOOTH?

It is a tooth that is embedded in the bone or gum tissue. It is blocked from coming into the mouth properly due to lack of space, neighboring teeth or dense jaw bone. Wisdom teeth most frequently become impacted, as they normally are the last teeth to erupt.

WHY SHOULD IMPACTED TEETH BE REMOVED?

Because of their position, impacted teeth often cause gum and surrounding soft tissue infection, and can eventually cause damage to adjacent teeth or jaw bone. Frequently, cysts can form around impacted teeth. Occasionally, tumors can develop within such cysts over time. When warranted, such cysts will be biopsied at the time extractions.

HOW ARE IMPACTED TEETH REMOVED?

The bone and soft tissue covering the impacted tooth is incised and partly removed to expose the tooth that is to be extracted. In some cases it is then necessary to dissect the tooth into pieces to facilitate its removal.

WHAT KINDS OF ANESTHESIA CAN BE USED?

The surgery can be done using 1) local injections or local with nitrous oxide analgesia. 2) More frequently, intravenous sedation or semi-sleep is used. In addition, 3) general anesthesia or complete sleep also given intravenously can be used where applicable. Any intravenous procedure may irritate the arm vein used. This area may appear reddened and remain tender for a period of time. You should not operate any vehicle or hazardous devices for at least 24 hours or until fully recovered from the effects of the anesthetic, medications, and drugs that may have been given you in the office for your care.

WHAT ARE THE AFTER EFFECTS OF REMOVING IMPACTED TEETH?

As with any kind of surgery, there are some normal after effects from the removal of impacted teeth. The most frequent and immediate effect is a swelling about the face. This will last for several days. Commonly, some stiffness of the jaw muscles occurs and can last for nearly a week. The post-surgical discomfort can be controlled by the medication that will be prescribed for you. Frequently, the surgical areas will ooze a small amount of blood intermittently for the first one or two days. Discoloration of the skin in the swollen areas of the face or of the gum tissue can also occur for a time.

Rarely, other after effects may be experienced. Though they do occur infrequently, you should be advised that the possibility of their occurrence does exist. A numbness of the teeth, jaw, chin, lips, or tongue can arise after the removal of impacted teeth. This is usually temporary, but may last for an unpredictable period of time and is occasionally permanent. There is also a remote possibility of a fracture to the lower jaw.

There are many bacteria that normally grow in the mouth, but infection is infrequently seen after surgery. Accidental damage or injury to neighboring teeth, restorations or structures can happen. Occasionally after removal of upper teeth, sinus infections or openings may occur. Rarely, fragments of teeth may be lost within a large sinus. These conditions would require additional treatment. Sometimes a "dry socket" may develop and require the periodic placement of a medicated dressing in the extraction site.

This information will be discussed with you by Dr. Crinzi. Please do not hesitate to ask any questions you may have.