

Department of Plastic and Oral Surgery

Wisdom teeth removal

LOCATIONS

Boston Children's Hospital

300 Longwood Avenue
Boston, MA 02115
617-355-6259

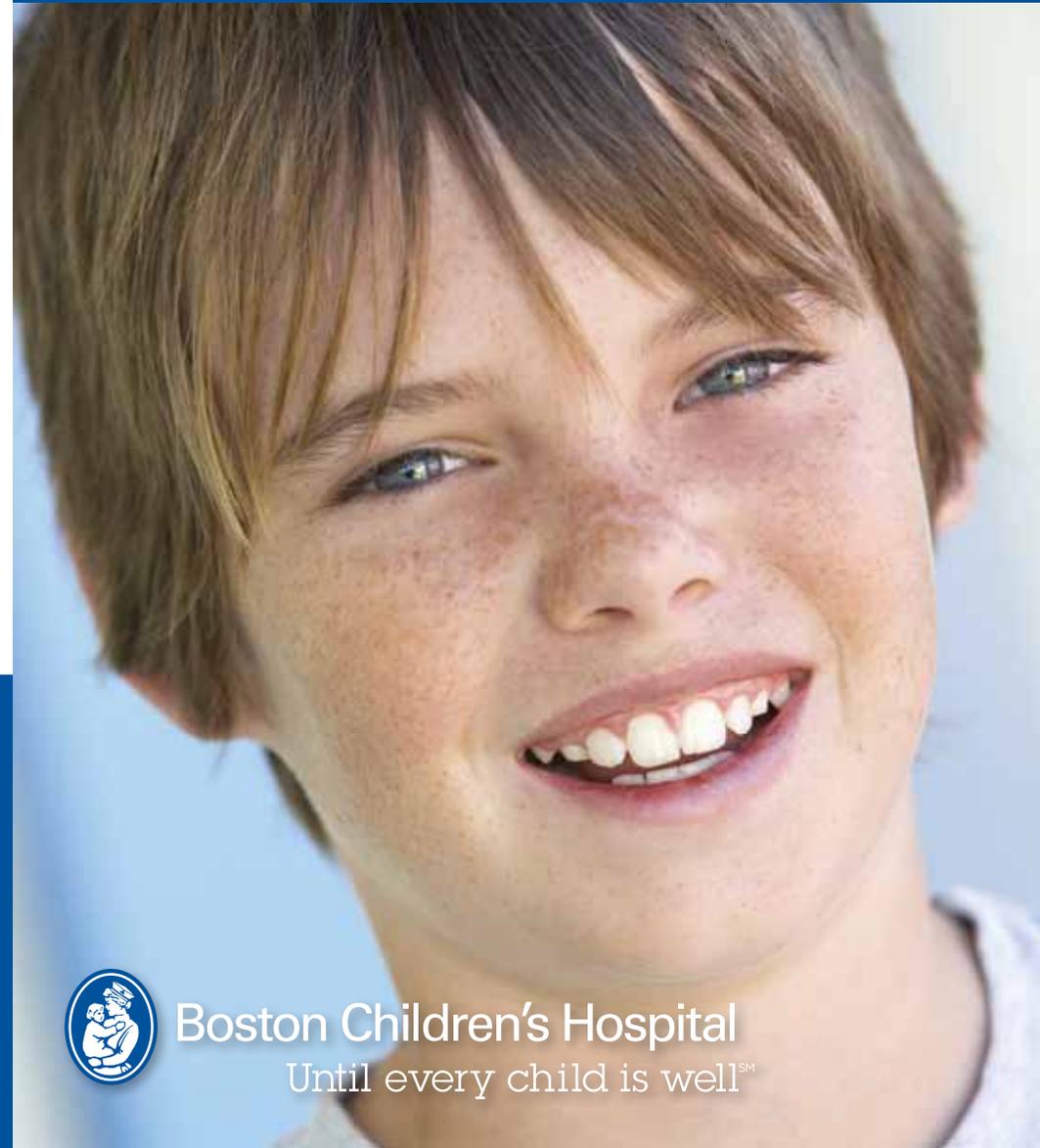
Boston Children's Hospital at Waltham

9 Hope Avenue
Waltham, MA 02453
781-216-1600

International

For families residing outside of the United States, contact Boston Children's International Center, which facilitates the medical review of patient records and appointment scheduling and provides assistance with customs and immigration, transportation and hotel and housing accommodations.
01-617-355-5209 | international.center@childrens.harvard.edu

bostonchildrens.org/plastics



Boston Children's Hospital
Until every child is wellSM

Wisdom teeth

Wisdom teeth, also known as the third molars, are the last permanent teeth to develop. Because our jaws are usually too small to accommodate these teeth, they are often unable to erupt.

What is an impacted tooth?

A tooth becomes impacted when its eruption and growth are prevented by limited space in the mouth. A partially impacted tooth begins to erupt but only partially breaks through the gum tissue, whereas a completely impacted tooth never breaks through the gum tissue and bone. Most people have at least one impacted wisdom tooth.

Treatment for wisdom teeth

Wisdom teeth are usually removed during the teenage years or early 20s. The operation consists of an incision in the gum and exposure of the tooth. If bone covers the tooth, the surgeon removes a small portion of the bone with a drill to allow access to the tooth. The tooth is then sectioned and stitches are used to bring the gums together.

Surgical risks and complications

Swelling, mild discomfort and joint and muscle stiffness are all common following removal of wisdom teeth. Sinus and nerve problems can occur, but are extremely uncommon. A dry socket may develop if a blood clot prematurely loosens, leaving the socket open and dry. The exact cause of a dry socket is unknown.

Recovery

During the first 72 hours, use an ice pack to help reduce swelling. Skin discoloration or bruising can occur, but should disappear within a few days. For the first two days following the procedure, a soft food diet and staying well-hydrated are recommended. Avoid using straws, smoking, vigorous mouth rinsing and hard, sticky or spun foods like candy.

Conditions caused by impacted wisdom teeth

Partially impacted wisdom teeth can cause problems such as pain, infection, crowding and decay and/or damage to surrounding molars. In rare cases, a cyst or tumor may develop around an impacted tooth.



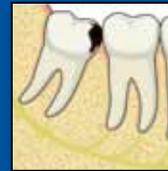
Acute gum infection (pericoronitis)

As the tooth breaks through the gum, the gum can become infected, causing pain and swelling.



Chronic gum (periodontal) disease

Bacteria and food can collect under the gum tissue covering an impacted tooth, and can then lead to gum disease and loss of the adjacent second molar.



Tooth decay

Because of their position in the posterior oral cavity, wisdom teeth can be hard to clean. This can lead to decay of both the wisdom tooth and the adjacent teeth.



Poor positioning

A tooth that erupts toward the cheek can irritate nearby tissue and interfere with your bite.



Cysts and tumors

An impacted tooth is encased in a dental sac. This sac can form a cyst or tumor that can expand and destroy surrounding bone.