IMPACTED AND UNERUPTED TEETH

What is an impacted tooth? A tooth that is blocked by another tooth, dense bone, or thick tissue and therefore cannot grow into its proper place in the mouth. It is a pathological condition that should be treated.

What harm do impacted teeth do? Impacted teeth press against adjacent teeth that can injure them or push them out of position. 2. A large cyst can form around the impacted tooth, or cause destruction of the surrounding bone and damage other teeth in the area. 3. Whenever saliva or food can reach the tooth, decay may occur. 4. Germs in the saliva may cause an infection around the impacted tooth. This infection may be spread to the cheek, throat, or neck, with severe pain and possible stiffness of the jaws, and general body illness. 5. Occasionally impacted teeth may be the source of severe pain referred to the adjacent teeth or the jaw, head and neck.

What is it like to have an impacted tooth removed? The impacted tooth is usually beneath the surface and covered by bone. We consider its removal an operation in every sense of the word. This is not meant to be frightening, but rather to give a better understanding about certain features of the surgery and the need for good follow up care.

The removal of the tooth is done with excellent surgical principles, meticulously sterile instruments, good light, a dry operative field, gentle handling of the soft tissue and bone, and the advantages of a highly specialized trained team.

Although patients are referred for a specific reason or problem, the doctor will examine the patient thoroughly and convey any additional findings for discussion.

How is this procedure carried out? Local “freezing”, sedation or general anesthesia may be used in the office, the majority of cases are done with sedation and local anesthesia. This helps control bleeding, allows the surgeon to work without haste and causes less disturbances to the patient. In the hospital most cases are done with general anesthesia. Local anesthesia is still given so that the patient is free from pain on awakening.

Depending on the severity of the case, the procedure may last for ten to sixty minutes. The wound will usually be closed with dissolving stitches. Printed instructions for home care will be given as well as a prescription for necessary medication. You will be seen in our office in one week to check surgical site. It may take five to seven days for your mouth to feel comfortable and another four to six weeks for the tissue to completely heal at the site of the surgery. Be prepared to take up to one week away from your usual activities.

It is normal to be drowsy following sedation or a general anesthesia thus you may not drive a car or operate machinery for 24 hours. A responsible adult must be available to take home following surgery and stay with you until you can manage on your own.

Are there any complications?
Even with proper care, operations carry some risk and complications may occur.

The wound remaining after an impacted tooth is removed is a large one, and healing may be delayed because the body is unable to rebuild normal tissue as quickly as with a small wound. Fortunately, in the upper jaw healing proceeds uneventfully. In the lower jaw, however, healing will take longer. **After surgery, you must thoroughly cleanse the mouth after every food intake. If anything clings to the stitches, the gum tissue or the site of surgery, infection or delayed healing may result.**

There is often some bleeding afterwards, but this will usually be slight and stop by itself after a few hours. Instructions will be given that will tell you what to do in event that the bleeding is more serious. **The doctor is always available should there be a problem.**

Lower impacted teeth usually rest on the main nerve to the tongue. Sometimes, in spite of all precautions, these nerves can be bruised or stretched. The result may be altered sensation which is often partial or complete numbness of the lower lip, chin inside of the cheek, gum tissue and all the teeth on that side or the side, top, or tip of the tongue. This effect does not last more than a few weeks in most cases, improving as the nerve repairs itself. In some cases, the altered sensation may last several months or years and may be permanent. The occurrence and duration of this problem is unpredictable. **Altered sensation does not affect appearance.**

Upper impacted third molars lie against the wall of the sinus. Occasionally the thin wall of the bone cracks slightly and blood seeps into the sinus. In such an event the patient will notice the presence of blood in the nose. As a rule, with use of the prescribed therapy, this clears up promptly.

All patients about to have impacted teeth removed should understand that adjacent teeth may have been weakened or otherwise injured by the presence of the impacted tooth. This injury may not become apparent until the impacted tooth is removed. This often means that these teeth may be sensitive or may be slightly loose. Adjacent teeth must therefore be considered on probation for **three to six months** after the impacted tooth has been removed. A meticulous oral hygiene routine, as outlined in the instructions that will be given to you, **must** be followed. Large fillings or caps next to the impacted teeth may be dislodged at surgery. If necessary, a temporary filling will be placed and you will be asked to return to your dentist for treatment once healing is complete.

Stiffness of the jaw is a common occurrence and it **may** last several weeks. You may find it difficult to open your mouth wide or eat normal foods during the initial healing period. Occasionally the jaw joints themselves will be particularly sore or stiff. This is especially common when there has been any type of jaw joint problem (eg. Locking, clicking, popping, pain) before surgery. If this persists, additional treatment is required.

Favorable healing includes developing a blood clot which may dissolve prematurely, leaving raw underlying tissues often termed as “dry socket.” Should you experience increasing discomfort during the healing phase, this should be brought to the attention of the doctor immediately.
In **very rare** instances, the removal of impacted teeth from the lower jaw may result in a jaw fracture. In most cases, this can be predicted before surgery and you will be informed of this possibility. In any case, this may occur when the tooth, because of its size and unusual position, has weakened the jaw. Every possible precaution is always taken to prevent such an occurrence.

There is a doctor on call from our office **24 hours a day, seven days a week**. Should there be any serious problem following surgery, you may reach the doctor at any time.

The receipt of this information sheet indicates that in consenting to have impacted teeth removed, the patient clearly understands the risks that have been described. **The doctor will be glad to discuss any item with you and answer any questions you wish to ask.**

**The American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons** notes the scientific evidence that impacted teeth are a pathologic entity and surgical management is the treatment of choice; this is in concert with the National Institute of Health finding that “…Impaction or malposition of a third molar is an abnormal state and may justify its removal. Such treatment is not considered ‘prophylactic’.”