



## WISDOM TEETH

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The question often comes up of whether or not to have wisdom teeth removed so they will not spoil the orthodontic result. Or, people want to know if having their wisdom teeth out will prevent lower front teeth from crowding. Still others want to know if removal of the wisdom teeth will cause uncrowding of already crowded teeth.

It is impossible to predict for certain if the tooth movement we see following orthodontic treatment has a direct relationship with the emergence of the wisdom teeth (or with their impaction). Why then do some practitioners recommend wisdom teeth be removed for orthodontic reasons. Toward the end of the late teen years or beginning of the twenties the following are happening:

1. Wisdom teeth (18-year molars) are coming in.
2. Retainers are being worn less or have been lost.
3. The bite is deepening through several actions.
4. Stress induced clenching or grinding habits start.

Factors two and three above probably account for most of the lower front tooth movement blamed on the wisdom teeth.

Most orthodontists will probably agree to the broad statement that wisdom teeth probably do not cause lower front teeth to become crowded, with or without orthodontic treatment. In addition, we believe it is extremely unlikely, if not impossible, for removal of wisdom teeth to cause uncrowding of already crowded teeth. Still, we often recommend wisdom teeth be removed for several reasons.

The most important reason to have wisdom teeth removed would be the pain or infection caused by the wisdom teeth themselves. Second, is the potential for unerupted wisdom teeth to be a future source of pain or infection. It's largely an educated guess, but one thing for certain, we do not want to wait for an infection to take them out, because of the increased risk of complications from extraction of an infected tooth.

So where does that leave us when deciding on an uninfected wisdom tooth? We look at the x-rays. If the angle of the wisdom tooth is such that it will not likely come into the mouth or if there is clearly no room for a healthy wisdom tooth, we often recommend the wisdom tooth be removed as a preventive measure.