



Bite

Word of mouth

36 MAR 2015

Featured

Why do we have wisdom teeth?

You probably don't spend much time thinking about your third molars, commonly known as wisdom teeth, unless something goes wrong with them. Many people have had personal experience or know someone who has had wisdom tooth problems resulting in them being removed. So, you might wonder why nature has afflicted us with these apparently useless teeth? The answer lies in the story of human evolution.

The human third molars begin to erupt, or emerge through the jaw tissue and into the mouth, between the ages of 17 and 25 years. This age span is when human beings are said to grow 'wiser', hence the nickname. Because wisdom teeth develop and erupt so late, there are many variables that can interfere with them erupting healthily into their correct position. Thus, they are often advised to be removed, often soon after they erupt.

Wisdom teeth through the ages

Wisdom teeth have been around for at least 100 million years, since before our human ancestors walked upright. The humanoid skull from that era had much larger jaws than we have today, so all 32 teeth, including the

third molars, fit comfortably. Early humans needed all of their molars to grind and chew the raw plant material prevalent in their diets. Wisdom teeth, with their delayed eruption timing, provided a sort of back-up function. The wisdom teeth came in as the first and second molars were becoming worn down from use.

As the hominid ancestors evolved into humans, both physical and cultural changes affected the importance and function

of the third molars.

Jaw size grew smaller in response to increasingly upright posture.

Development of fire and agriculture also shifted human diets away from coarse, raw foods

that needed strong chewing surfaces.



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This month...

It's a big month for the mouth with March 20th being World Oral Health Day. This year is calling for an international focus on preventative techniques to achieve improved oral health around the globe.

Our topic for discussion this month is about the all-elusive 'wisdom teeth' and do they really provide us with any wisdom at all?

We're teaming up with Green Apple Wellness to speak at their quarterly diabetes education seminar.

And Jenna has some tips on when NOT to brush your teeth.

Dr Simon Franks



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This trend continues today, with processed foods and microwave cooking. As result, the third molars, like the appendix, can now be considered an evolutionary afterthought.

Whither the Wisdom Tooth

There's a great deal of variability in wisdom teeth. Some lucky people—about 35% of the population—never have to face wisdom tooth extraction because they never develop these teeth at all. Others get wisdom teeth but still have plenty of room of in their jaws to accommodate them—sometimes because they never develop the full complement of four. And some grow more than four wisdom teeth, which definitely leads to a crowded jaw.

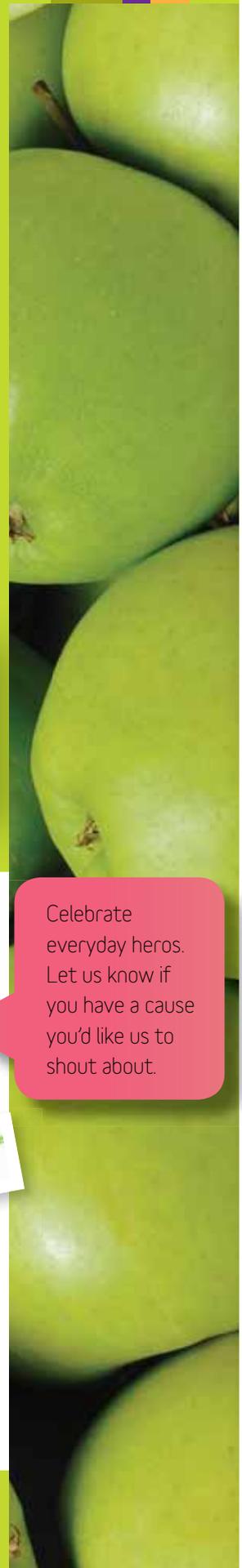
Most people who get wisdom teeth lack sufficient room in their jaws for the teeth to function. This can lead to problems when the wisdom teeth crowd or displace the other teeth. They are notoriously difficult to access and clean which means they can decay very easily. Some wisdom teeth don't erupt fully and become impacted; causing a gum cavity that collects food particles and bacteria, leading to infections and abscesses. Cysts can also develop around impacted wisdom teeth, leading to a deformed jawbone and other serious problems.

Even if your wisdom teeth fit your mouth, you're not necessarily home free. Problems that develop later in

wisdom teeth usually carry greater complications due to patient age and the development of the teeth themselves.

Overall, having an area that is constantly harbouring low-grade inflammation and infection in the body is not good long term for your immune system and overall systemic health. It has been shown that in individuals that form all four wisdom teeth with inadequate space to accommodate them, the best option is to have them removed while the person is young because the roots are small (making it less complex surgery) and the person heals quickly. In saying this, just because someone has wisdom teeth does not mean that they necessarily have to come out!

That's why at Bite Dental we take the time to assess all our patients with a full mouth x-ray to determine the presence and position of the wisdom teeth and proceed with the best treatment plan for that individual. We are all unique, with different blends of 'wisdom' to deal with... and dentally speaking—you are lucky if you have none!



Healthy Hygiene Hints

When NOT to brush your teeth!

This is a repeat tip - but one that is a very common mistake I hear every day.

As a blanket rule - **DO NOT brush your teeth within 30min of eating.**

This is especially important if you have consumed something acidic. When you eat or drink something that is not water (this includes, lemon water, flavoured water, soda and sparking water) - it takes 30 minutes for the natural bicarbonates in your saliva to return the mouth to neutral. In that time your teeth become soft, and if you apply force, you will quite literally brush your enamel away which does not grow back.

Try brushing before breakfast (perhaps in the shower) and follow your breakie with water or chewing gum (sugar free!).

Jenna



Community

Green Apple and diabetes

Bite Dental will be speaking at an education event hosted by Green Apple Wellness this month as a part of their comprehensive seminar series for people with diabetes. It's great to team up with such a motivated and like-minded practice to tackle this beast of chronic disease!



Celebrate everyday heros. Let us know if you have a cause you'd like us to shout about.