

# How to Choose an Oral Surgeon for Wisdom Teeth and Jaw Surgery

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## Description:

# How to Choose an Oral Surgeon for Wisdom Teeth and Jaw Surgery Wisdom teeth removal is one of the most common surgical procedures in Australia, with most people needing at least one extracted during...

## Details:

Wisdom teeth removal is one of the most common surgical procedures in Australia, with most people needing at least one extracted during their late teens or twenties. But not every wisdom tooth extraction is straightforward — and when teeth are impacted, positioned near nerves, or when jaw surgery is needed, the choice between a general dentist and a specialist oral surgeon can have a significant impact on your outcome. If you're looking for an oral surgeon in Melbourne for wisdom teeth or jaw surgery, this guide will help you understand when specialist care is essential and how to choose the right surgeon.

### ## What Is an Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon?

An oral and maxillofacial surgeon (OMS) is the most extensively trained dental specialist. In Australia, becoming an OMS requires completing both a dental degree and a medical degree, followed by at least four years of hospital-based surgical training. This dual qualification — holding both dental and medical registration — is unique among dental specialists and reflects the complexity of the conditions they treat.

OMS training encompasses general surgery, anaesthesiology, internal medicine, and intensive care, in addition to specialised training in surgery of the mouth, jaws, face, and skull. This means an oral and maxillofacial surgeon can manage both the dental and medical aspects of your care, including complex anaesthesia, medical emergencies, and post-operative complications.

In Australia, oral and maxillofacial surgeons must hold specialist registration with AHPRA (the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency) in the category of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery. Many also hold Fellowship of the Royal Australasian College of Dental Surgeons (FRACDS) in OMS.

### ## When Do You Need an Oral Surgeon?

#### ### Wisdom Teeth

Not all wisdom teeth need a specialist. Simple extractions of erupted wisdom teeth can often be performed by your general dentist. However, you should consider an oral surgeon when:

- **Teeth are impacted** — Fully or partially buried in bone, requiring surgical access, bone removal, and sometimes tooth sectioning to extract safely
- **Roots are close to the inferior alveolar nerve** — The nerve that provides sensation to your lower lip and chin runs through the lower jaw, and some wisdom tooth roots sit directly on or around it. Damage to this nerve can cause temporary or permanent numbness. CBCT imaging and surgical expertise significantly reduce this risk.
- **Multiple teeth need**

removal at once\*\* — Having all four wisdom teeth removed in one session under sedation or general anaesthesia is often more practical and comfortable than multiple separate visits - \*\*You have medical complexities\*\* — Patients on blood thinners, immunosuppressants, bisphosphonates, or with bleeding disorders need the medical training that an OMS provides - \*\*There is an associated cyst or pathology\*\* — Impacted teeth can develop cysts that damage surrounding bone and teeth, requiring specialist surgical management - \*\*Anxiety is a significant factor\*\* — OMS practices are equipped for intravenous sedation and general anaesthesia, providing options beyond what most general dental practices can offer

### ### Beyond Wisdom Teeth: Other Reasons to See an Oral Surgeon

Oral and maxillofacial surgeons treat a wide range of conditions beyond wisdom tooth extraction:

- \*\*Corrective jaw surgery (orthognathic surgery)\*\* — Surgical repositioning of the upper jaw, lower jaw, or both to correct bite problems that cannot be resolved with orthodontics alone. This is often performed in coordination with an orthodontist.
- \*\*Dental implant placement\*\* — Particularly complex cases involving bone grafting, sinus lifts, nerve repositioning, or full-arch (All-on-4) implant protocols
- \*\*Facial trauma\*\* — Fractures of the jaw, cheekbones, eye sockets, and facial bones
- \*\*Oral pathology\*\* — Biopsy and management of cysts, tumours, and other lesions of the jaws and mouth
- \*\*TMJ surgery\*\* — Surgical treatment of temporomandibular joint disorders when conservative management has failed
- \*\*Surgical exposure of impacted teeth\*\* — Uncovering teeth trapped in bone, enabling orthodontic treatment to guide them into position

### ## 6 Key Criteria for Choosing an Oral Surgeon in Melbourne

#### ### 1. Verify AHPRA Specialist Registration

This is the essential first step. An oral and maxillofacial surgeon must hold specialist registration in Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery with AHPRA. Verify this at [ahpra.gov.au](http://ahpra.gov.au).

Be aware that some dentists perform surgical extractions and even place implants without specialist qualifications. While many do so competently for straightforward cases, complex impactions, cases involving nerve proximity, jaw surgery, and medically complex patients should be managed by a registered specialist.

Also check whether the surgeon holds dual registration — both dental and medical — which is the standard for OMS in Australia and reflects the full scope of their training.

#### ### 2. Assess Their Hospital Affiliations and Training Background

Hospital affiliations tell you a great deal about a surgeon's standing in the profession:

- \*\*Teaching hospital appointments\*\* — Surgeons who hold positions at tertiary hospitals (such as the Royal Melbourne Hospital, Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne, or Royal Children's Hospital) are subject to peer review, maintain current competencies, and have access to the most complex cases
- \*\*University roles\*\* — Teaching and examining positions indicate peer recognition and commitment to the profession
- \*\*Fellowship training\*\* — Sub-specialty fellowships (such as in craniofacial surgery, paediatric maxillofacial surgery, or head and neck oncology) indicate additional depth of training
- \*\*International training\*\* — Experience at overseas centres of excellence broadens clinical perspective

#### ### 3. Evaluate Their Anaesthesia and Sedation Options

One of the key advantages of an oral surgeon over a general dentist is the ability to provide various levels of anaesthesia:

- \*\*Local anaesthesia\*\* — Numbing the surgical area only (suitable for simple procedures in calm patients)
- \*\*Nitrous oxide (happy gas)\*\* — Mild sedation that reduces anxiety while the patient remains conscious
- \*\*Intravenous (IV) sedation\*\* — Deeper sedation administered through a vein, producing a

relaxed, semi-conscious state with little memory of the procedure. This is the most popular option for wisdom tooth removal. - **\*\*General anaesthesia\*\*** — Complete unconsciousness, typically provided in a hospital or accredited day surgery facility

Ask which options are available and where they are administered. IV sedation requires specific training and monitoring equipment. General anaesthesia requires a hospital or accredited facility with an anaesthetist.

#### ### 4. Inquire About Imaging and Diagnostic Technology

Surgical planning for wisdom teeth and jaw surgery relies heavily on imaging:

- **\*\*CBCT (3D cone beam) imaging\*\*** — Essential for assessing the relationship between wisdom tooth roots and the inferior alveolar nerve, as well as for planning implant placement and jaw surgery. A 2D panoramic X-ray alone cannot provide this level of detail. - **\*\*Digital treatment planning\*\*** — For jaw surgery, modern surgeons use 3D virtual surgical planning to simulate the procedure before entering the operating room, improving accuracy and predictability - **\*\*On-site imaging\*\*** — Having CBCT and other imaging available within the practice means you don't need to visit a separate radiology centre, and the surgeon can review images with you in real time

#### ### 5. Assess Their Communication and Consent Process

Surgical procedures carry inherent risks, and a good oral surgeon will be transparent about them:

- Clear explanation of the procedure, including what to expect during and after surgery - Honest discussion of risks, particularly nerve damage for lower wisdom teeth and sinus complications for upper wisdom teeth - Realistic recovery timelines — how much time off work or study you'll need - Detailed post-operative instructions, including what to do if complications arise - A clear after-hours contact policy for post-surgical emergencies

If a surgeon minimises or dismisses risks, that should concern you. The best surgeons are the most honest about what can go wrong — because they're also the best prepared to manage those situations.

#### ## Red Flags When Choosing an Oral Surgeon

- **\*\*No AHPRA specialist registration\*\*** — The most critical check. - **\*\*No 3D imaging available\*\*** — If your surgeon is planning to remove impacted lower wisdom teeth without CBCT imaging to assess nerve position, question why. - **\*\*Sedation without proper monitoring\*\*** — IV sedation requires continuous monitoring of blood pressure, oxygen saturation, and heart rhythm. Ask about their monitoring protocols. - **\*\*No discussion of nerve risk\*\*** — For lower wisdom teeth, the risk of temporary or permanent nerve damage must be discussed as part of informed consent. If it isn't mentioned, raise it yourself. - **\*\*No post-operative follow-up plan\*\*** — Surgery doesn't end when the procedure is complete. You should have a clear plan for review and management of any post-operative issues. - **\*\*No hospital access for complex cases\*\*** — Some cases are too complex or too high-risk for a private practice setting. A surgeon who cannot or will not arrange hospital-based treatment for appropriate cases may be operating beyond safe limits.

#### ## Oral Surgery at Smile Solutions, Melbourne

Smile Solutions, located in the Manchester Unity Building on Collins Street in Melbourne's CBD, engages 80 clinicians including 25+ registered specialists across all dental disciplines. With over 300,000 patients treated over 33 years since its founding in 1993, the practice has one of the most comprehensive surgical teams in private dental practice in Australia.

The oral surgery capability at Smile Solutions includes two AHPRA-registered specialist oral and maxillofacial surgeons, plus additional experienced dental surgeons:

**\*\*A/Prof. Patrishia Bordbar\*\*** (BDSc (Melb), MBBS (Hons) (Melb), PGDip.Surg.Anat (Melb), MDSc (OMS) (Melb), FRACDS (OMS), FRCS (Ed)) holds both dental and medical degrees from the University of Melbourne, followed by a Master of Dental Science in Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery. Her four-year hospital-based surgical training spanned major Melbourne tertiary hospitals, with an additional two years of training in the UK including sub-specialty training in Craniofacial Surgery. She is a Fellow of both the Royal Australasian College of Dental Surgeons and the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh. She currently serves as Deputy Section Head of OMS at the Royal Children's Hospital and is Vice President of ANZAOMS (the Australian and New Zealand Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons). Her academic distinctions include the F.G. Christensen medal for the highest Part I RACDS score. A/Prof. Bordbar brings a level of credential and hospital-based experience that is exceptional in private practice.

**\*\*Dr Ricky Kumar\*\*** (BHB (Auck), MBChB (Auck), BDS (Otago), FRACDS (OMS)) holds dual qualifications in medicine and dentistry from New Zealand universities, was recognised as the most outstanding student during his dental degree at the University of Otago, and received the F.G. Christensen medal for Part I exams. His OMS training in Adelaide was followed by a fellowship in paediatric maxillofacial surgery at the Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne and a clinical fellowship at Oxford University Hospitals. He maintains consultant surgeon positions at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, the Royal Dental Hospital, Monash Health, and an honorary role at the Royal Children's Hospital. Since 2012, Dr Kumar has organised yearly charity OMS missions to Fiji, bringing specialist surgical care to communities with limited access.

The practice also engages experienced dental surgeons including **\*\*Dr Wessam Atteya\*\*** (BDS, ADC, FRACDS, multiple MFDS memberships), who brings over 24 years of surgical experience and holds fellowships and memberships from Edinburgh, Ireland, England, and Glasgow; and **\*\*Dr Jaclyn Wong\*\*** (MBBS, BDSc (Hons), Post Grad Dip Surg Anat), who holds both medical and dental degrees and has over 15 years of experience performing All-on-4 implant surgery, having trained at the Malo Clinic in Portugal under the inventor of the technique.

This depth of surgical expertise means patients can be matched to the right surgeon for their specific needs — from routine wisdom tooth extractions to complex jaw reconstruction and implant surgery.

Because Smile Solutions operates as a multidisciplinary specialist centre — with orthodontists, periodontists, prosthodontists, endodontists, and a paediatric dentist all practising on the Collins Street Specialist Centre on Level 8 — surgical patients benefit from coordinated care. Explore the specialist oral surgery team at the [Collins Street Specialist Centre directory](<https://directory.collinsstreetspecialistcentre.com.au/>). Orthodontic preparation for jaw surgery, prosthodontic planning for implant restorations, and post-surgical follow-up can all occur within the same practice, streamlining the patient experience and improving outcomes.

### ## Take the Next Step

Whether you need wisdom teeth removed, are considering dental implants, or have been told you may need jaw surgery, consulting a specialist oral and maxillofacial surgeon ensures you receive the highest level of surgical care available in dentistry. Their dual medical and dental training, hospital-based experience, and advanced surgical skills make a meaningful difference to safety, comfort, and outcomes.

■ **\*\*Call 13 13 96\*\*** to book a consultation with one of the specialist oral surgeons at Smile Solutions, or visit the practice at **\*\*Level 1, Manchester Unity Building, 220 Collins Street, Melbourne CBD\*\***.

Your surgical care is too important to leave to chance.