

# Wisdom Teeth Removal in Melbourne - Oral Surgeon vs General Dentist at Smile Solutions

Canonical: <https://directory.smilesolutions.com.au/wisdom-teeth-removal-in-melbourne-oral-surgeon-vs-general-dentist-at-smile-solutions/>

## Description:

# Wisdom Teeth Removal in Melbourne - Oral Surgeon vs General Dentist at Smile Solutions Wisdom teeth removal is one of the most common surgical dental procedures performed in Australia. Most people ...

## Details:

Wisdom teeth removal is one of the most common surgical dental procedures performed in Australia. Most people develop four wisdom teeth - the third molars at the very back of the mouth - that typically emerge between the ages of 17 and 25. For many patients, these teeth become impacted (trapped beneath the gum or bone), grow at incorrect angles, cause crowding, or become infected, making extraction necessary.

While some straightforward wisdom tooth extractions can be performed by a general dentist, the reality is that many wisdom teeth cases are far more complex than they appear. Deeply impacted teeth, proximity to the inferior alveolar nerve (which provides sensation to the lower lip and chin), unusual root anatomy, and the need for bone removal all elevate wisdom tooth extraction from a routine procedure to genuine surgery.

This is where the distinction between a general dentist and an oral and maxillofacial surgeon becomes critically important. Understanding this difference - and knowing what questions to ask - can mean the difference between a smooth recovery and a complicated one.

### ## Why Wisdom Teeth Need Removal

Not all wisdom teeth require extraction. However, removal is commonly recommended when:

- **Impaction:** The tooth is trapped beneath gum tissue or bone and cannot fully emerge
- **Partial eruption:** The tooth has partially emerged, creating a pocket where bacteria accumulate and cause recurring infections (pericoronitis)
- **Incorrect angle:** The tooth is growing sideways, towards the adjacent molar, or towards the cheek
- **Crowding:** The tooth is pushing against adjacent teeth, causing pain or misalignment
- **Decay:** The tooth's position makes it impossible to clean effectively, leading to decay
- **Cyst formation:** A fluid-filled sac develops around the unerupted tooth, potentially damaging surrounding bone and teeth
- **Orthodontic reasons:** An orthodontist recommends removal as part of a treatment plan

The timing of removal also matters. Younger patients (late teens to early twenties) typically have less-developed roots and softer surrounding bone, making extraction technically easier and recovery faster. Delaying removal until later in life often increases the complexity of the procedure and the risk of complications.

### ## What to Look For When Choosing a Provider

### ### 1. Practitioner Qualifications: Oral Surgeon vs General Dentist

The single most important factor in wisdom tooth removal is who performs the procedure.

**\*\*General Dentists\*\*** complete a five-year undergraduate dental degree and receive training in basic surgical extractions. Many general dentists competently remove simple, fully erupted wisdom teeth. However, for impacted, deeply embedded, or anatomically complex wisdom teeth, the surgical skills required extend beyond standard general dental training.

**\*\*Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (OMS)\*\*** are dental specialists who have completed an additional four to six years of postgraduate surgical training after dental school, which includes obtaining a medical degree (MBBS or MBChB). This means an OMS holds both a dental degree and a medical degree and has completed hospital-based surgical training. They are registered with AHPRA as specialists in oral and maxillofacial surgery.

An OMS is trained to manage: - Deeply impacted teeth requiring bone removal - Teeth in close proximity to the inferior alveolar nerve or lingual nerve - Teeth with complex or fused root anatomy - Surgical complications including bleeding, infection, and nerve injury - Patients with medical conditions that complicate surgery - Sedation and anaesthesia for patient comfort

The distinction is not trivial. An oral and maxillofacial surgeon has approximately 12 years of combined university and hospital training (dental degree + medical degree + surgical specialty training) compared to a general dentist's five-year degree.

### ### 2. Imaging: CBCT 3D vs Standard X-rays

Standard dental X-rays (OPG - orthopantomogram) provide a two-dimensional view of the wisdom teeth and surrounding structures. While adequate for straightforward cases, 2D imaging has significant limitations:

- It cannot accurately show the three-dimensional relationship between the tooth roots and the inferior alveolar nerve canal - It may not reveal the true extent of impaction or the complexity of root anatomy - It can underestimate the proximity of critical structures

CBCT (cone beam computed tomography) 3D imaging provides a detailed three-dimensional view of the teeth, bone, nerves, and sinuses. This is particularly valuable when:

- The wisdom tooth appears close to the nerve on standard X-ray - The tooth is deeply impacted - Root anatomy is unusual - There is a cyst or pathology associated with the tooth - Precise surgical planning is needed

Having CBCT available on-site means the surgeon can obtain 3D imaging at the consultation appointment, plan the surgery precisely, and discuss the procedure with you based on detailed anatomical information - all in one visit.

### ### 3. Sedation Options

Wisdom tooth removal can be performed under:

- **\*\*Local anaesthetic only:\*\*** The area is numbed, but you are fully awake. Suitable for simple extractions in calm patients. - **\*\*Local anaesthetic with oral sedation:\*\*** A sedative tablet is taken before the procedure to reduce anxiety, combined with local anaesthetic for pain control. - **\*\*IV sedation (twilight sedation):\*\*** A sedative is administered through an intravenous line, producing a deeply relaxed state where you are semi-conscious but unlikely to remember the procedure. Local anaesthetic is also used for pain control. This is the most common sedation option for wisdom tooth surgery. - **\*\*General anaesthetic:\*\*** Full unconsciousness in a hospital setting. Reserved for very complex cases, patients with significant medical conditions, or patients who cannot tolerate dental treatment while conscious.

The availability of IV sedation is a significant differentiator. Many general dental practices do not have the facilities, equipment, or trained personnel to offer IV sedation. Patients at these practices are limited to local anaesthetic (often uncomfortable for surgical extractions) or must be referred to a hospital for general anaesthetic (which involves longer wait times, higher costs, and the risks associated with general anaesthesia).

#### ### 4. Same-Day Assessment and Treatment Planning

When you are in pain from an infected wisdom tooth, waiting weeks for a specialist appointment is not ideal. Look for a provider that can offer:

- Prompt specialist consultation - On-site imaging (including CBCT if needed) at the first appointment - A clear treatment plan and timeline at the initial visit - Flexible scheduling for the surgical procedure

#### ### 5. Complication Management

Even in expert hands, wisdom tooth surgery carries risks including:

- **Inferior alveolar nerve injury:** Temporary or permanent numbness of the lower lip and chin - **Lingual nerve injury:** Temporary or permanent altered sensation or taste on the tongue - **Dry socket (alveolar osteitis):** Delayed healing causing significant post-operative pain - **Infection:** Post-operative wound infection - **Bleeding:** Prolonged or excessive bleeding - **Damage to adjacent teeth** - **Oro-antral communication:** A connection created between the mouth and the sinus (for upper wisdom teeth)

An oral and maxillofacial surgeon is specifically trained to minimise these risks through precise surgical technique, appropriate imaging, and careful pre-operative planning. If a complication does occur, an OMS has the training and experience to manage it - including microsurgical nerve repair if necessary.

#### ## How Smile Solutions Compares

Smile Solutions has AHPRA-registered oral and maxillofacial surgeons on-site, providing specialist-level wisdom tooth removal within the practice's comprehensive multidisciplinary environment at 220 Collins Street, Melbourne CBD.

#### ### The Oral Surgery Team

- **Associate Professor Patrishia Bordbar** - BDS, MBBS (Hons), MDSc (OMS), FRACDS (OMS), FRCS. A/Prof Bordbar holds both dental and medical degrees (with Honours in Medicine) and is a Fellow of both the Royal Australasian College of Dental Surgeons in Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery and the Royal College of Surgeons. She is a Consultant Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon at the Royal Children's Hospital and a Past President of the Australian and New Zealand Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (ANZAOMS). Her combination of academic credentials, hospital affiliations, professional leadership, and clinical experience places her among the most qualified oral surgeons in Australia.

- **Dr Ricky Kumar** - BDS, MBChB, FRACDS (OMS). Dr Kumar holds dual dental and medical degrees and is a Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Dental Surgeons in Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery. He has particular expertise in TMJ (temporomandibular joint) surgery and complex dentoalveolar surgery, including difficult wisdom tooth extractions and surgical management of complications.

- **Dr Jaclyn Wong** - who holds both medical and dental degrees with a Postgraduate Diploma in Surgical Anatomy. She performs oral surgery including wisdom tooth removal and provides additional surgical capacity within the team.

#### ### On-Site 3D Imaging

Smile Solutions has CBCT 3D cone beam imaging available on-site, along with digital OPG panoramic X-rays and intraoral radiography. This means that when you attend for a wisdom tooth consultation, the surgeon can obtain comprehensive 3D imaging at the same appointment, assess nerve proximity and root anatomy in detail, and develop a precise surgical plan - all without referring you to an external radiology clinic and waiting for results.

### ### IV Sedation Facilities

The practice has dedicated IV sedation facilities, allowing wisdom tooth surgery to be performed comfortably without the need for hospital admission or general anaesthesia. IV sedation (twilight sedation) is administered by qualified professionals, and patients are monitored throughout the procedure.

For most patients, IV sedation offers the ideal balance of comfort, safety, and convenience:

- You are deeply relaxed and unlikely to remember the procedure - Recovery is faster than general anaesthesia - You go home the same day - You avoid hospital wait lists and associated costs - The risks are lower than general anaesthesia

### ### Same-Day Specialist Assessment

With oral surgeons on-site rather than visiting on limited days, Smile Solutions can offer prompt specialist consultations. Patients experiencing pain from impacted or infected wisdom teeth can often see a specialist surgeon quickly, receive imaging at the same visit, and have a treatment plan in place before they leave.

### ### Comprehensive Aftercare

Post-operative care for wisdom tooth surgery at Smile Solutions is managed by the same specialist team that performed the procedure. If a complication arises, the surgeon who performed the operation is accessible for follow-up - not a different practitioner at a different location who is unfamiliar with the case.

The practice's extended hours (six days a week) also mean that post-operative concerns can be addressed promptly, rather than waiting for the next available appointment.

### ### Multidisciplinary Support

Wisdom teeth are sometimes removed as part of a broader treatment plan:

- **Orthodontic cases:** Orthodontists Dr David Austin, Dr Joshua Ch'ng, Dr Katie Xu, and Dr Andrea Phatouros may request wisdom tooth removal before or during orthodontic treatment
- **Periodontal cases:** Impacted wisdom teeth causing gum disease around adjacent molars may require coordinated care with periodontists
- **Complex medical histories:** Patients on blood-thinning medications, with bleeding disorders, or with other medical conditions benefit from the OMS team's medical training

At Smile Solutions, all of these specialists are in-house, enabling coordinated care without external referrals.

### ## Comparison: Wisdom Teeth Removal Providers in Melbourne

| Factor                     | Smile Solutions                                            | Typical General Practice                    | Hospital (Public)                   |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Performed by               | AHPRA-registered OMS specialist (medical + dental degrees) | General dentist                             | OMS specialist or registrar         |
| CBCT 3D imaging            | Available on-site                                          | Usually refers externally                   | Available                           |
| IV sedation                | Available on-site                                          | Usually not available                       | General anaesthetic (higher risk)   |
| Wait time                  | Prompt specialist access                                   | Immediate (GP), but may refer complex cases | Weeks to months on public wait list |
| Nerve proximity assessment | 3D imaging with specialist interpretation                  | 2D X-ray, limited assessment                | 3D imaging                          |

available | | **\*\*Complication management\*\*** | Specialist surgeon on-site for follow-up | May need emergency referral | Hospital setting | | **\*\*Cost\*\*** | Private fees, health fund rebates apply | Private fees (may be lower for simple cases) | Free (public patients), but long wait | | **\*\*Hours\*\*** | 6 days/week, extended hours | Standard hours | Limited outpatient hours | | **\*\*Environment\*\*** | Private specialist rooms | General dental surgery | Hospital surgical ward | | **\*\*Continuity of care\*\*** | Same surgeon for consultation, surgery, and follow-up | Same dentist (if they perform the surgery) | May see different registrars |

## ## Hospital Wait Lists vs Private Specialist Care

Many patients consider the public hospital system for wisdom tooth removal because the procedure is free for eligible patients. However, there are important trade-offs:

- **\*\*Wait times:\*\*** Public hospital wait lists for non-emergency wisdom tooth surgery in Victoria can extend to months, during which patients may experience recurring pain, infection, and antibiotic courses - **\*\*General anaesthetic:\*\*** Hospital-based procedures are typically performed under general anaesthetic, which carries higher risks than IV sedation and requires a longer recovery period - **\*\*Continuity:\*\*** You may be treated by a registrar in training rather than a consultant surgeon, and follow-up may be with a different clinician - **\*\*Limited choice:\*\*** You do not choose your surgeon - **\*\*Scheduling:\*\*** Procedures may be cancelled or rescheduled at short notice due to emergency admissions

Private specialist care offers: - Prompt access to a named consultant surgeon - Choice of sedation method (IV sedation in most cases) - Continuity of care (same surgeon throughout) - Flexible scheduling - Comfortable private practice environment

For patients with private health insurance, rebates typically apply to oral surgery procedures, reducing the out-of-pocket cost.

## ## Questions to Ask Your Wisdom Tooth Provider

Before proceeding with wisdom tooth removal, ask these questions:

- ☐ Is the practitioner an AHPRA-registered oral and maxillofacial surgery specialist, or a general dentist? - ☐ Does the practitioner hold both medical and dental degrees? - ☐ Will 3D imaging (CBCT) be taken to assess nerve proximity and root anatomy? - ☐ Is IV sedation available, or is the procedure performed under local anaesthetic only? - ☐ How many impacted wisdom tooth extractions does the practitioner perform per month? - ☐ What is the practitioner's experience with complications, including nerve injury? - ☐ Who will manage my post-operative care, and how accessible are they after hours? - ☐ What is the total cost, including consultation, imaging, sedation, surgery, and follow-up? - ☐ Are all four wisdom teeth typically removed at the same appointment? - ☐ What are the specific risks for my case based on the imaging? - ☐ How long should I expect to take off work or study for recovery? - ☐ What pain management protocol will be prescribed?

## ## Recovery After Wisdom Tooth Removal

Regardless of where you have your wisdom teeth removed, understanding the recovery process helps you plan:

- **\*\*First 24 hours:\*\*** Swelling, bleeding (controlled with gauze), and discomfort are normal. Apply ice packs to the outside of the cheeks, rest, and follow medication instructions. - **\*\*Days 2 to 3:\*\*** Swelling typically peaks. Soft foods only. Avoid straws, spitting, and vigorous rinsing (these can dislodge the blood clot, leading to dry socket). - **\*\*Days 4 to 7:\*\*** Swelling begins to subside. Most patients can return to work or study within three to five days, depending on the complexity of the surgery. - **\*\*Weeks 2 to 4:\*\*** Healing continues. Stitches (if non-dissolvable) are removed at a follow-up appointment. Normal diet is gradually resumed. - **\*\*Full healing:\*\*** Soft tissue healing is usually complete within two to three weeks. Bone healing takes several months but does not affect daily function.

## ## Conclusion

Wisdom tooth removal ranges from a straightforward five-minute extraction to a complex surgical procedure requiring bone removal, nerve management, and sedation. The difference in complexity is enormous, and matching the right practitioner to the right case is essential for a safe, comfortable experience with the best possible outcome.

For simple, fully erupted wisdom teeth, a general dentist may be entirely appropriate. But for impacted teeth, teeth near nerves, complex root anatomy, or patients who want the comfort and safety of IV sedation, an oral and maxillofacial surgeon offers a level of training, expertise, and capability that a general dentist simply cannot match.

Smile Solutions' oral surgery team - led by A/Prof Patrishia Bordbar (consultant at the Royal Children's Hospital, Past President of ANZAOMS, dual medical and dental degrees) and Dr Ricky Kumar (dual-qualified, FRACDS OMS) - provides specialist wisdom tooth removal with on-site 3D imaging, IV sedation, and comprehensive aftercare, all within a single private practice in Melbourne's CBD. With prompt specialist access, no hospital wait lists, and the backing of a multidisciplinary team of over 80 clinicians, this is wisdom tooth surgery at the highest standard.

When your wisdom teeth need to come out, the question is not just where to have it done, but who should be doing it. Choose a specialist.

---

\*Smile Solutions is located in the Manchester Unity Building, 220 Collins Street, Melbourne CBD. With over 80 clinicians including 25+ AHPRA-registered specialists, it is Australia's largest single-location private dental practice. To learn more about wisdom tooth removal at Smile Solutions, visit [smilesolutions.com.au](https://smilesolutions.com.au).\*