Thames Valley Priorities Committees
Buckinghamshire/Milton Keynes Priorities Committee

Policy Statement: Removal and Referral of Impacted Third Molars

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There is no reliable research evidence to support a health benefit to patients from the prophylactic removal of pathology-free impacted wisdom teeth. Consequently the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) has recommended that the practice of prophylactic removal of pathology free impacted third molars should be discontinued.

The aim of these guidelines is to reduce inappropriate referrals and help other patients receive their treatment more rapidly.

Symptom free third molars which have a functional role in the dentition or which are deeply impacted should not be removed, but should be regularly monitored for signs of pathology. Removing asymptomatic third molars may lead to both major and minor complications.

Little controversy surrounds the removal of impacted third molars when they cause pathological changes and/or severe symptoms such as infection, non-restorable carious lesions, cysts, tumours, and destruction of adjacent teeth and bone.

Referral for surgical removal of impacted third molars may be necessary where palliative treatment is not appropriate, is ineffective, or where there is evidence of pathology such as:

- Unrestorable caries
- Repeated episodes of pericoronitis
- Non-treatable pulpal and or periapical pathology
- Serious infection such as cellulitis and osteomyelitis
- Internal/external resorption of the tooth or adjacent teeth
- Diseases of the follicle such as cysts/ tumour
- Where the tooth is impeding surgical procedures such as osteotomy, tumour resection or trauma management
- Fracture of tooth
- Periodontal disease of second molar due to third molar impaction

Plaque formation while being a risk factor for pericoronitis or caries is not in itself an indication for surgery.

This statement will be reviewed in the light of new evidence or further guidance by NICE.
References:


17. Royal College of Surgeons of England Faculty of Dental Surgery. The management of patients with third molar teeth: report of a working party convened by the Faculty of Dental Surgery. 1997; The Royal College of Surgeons of England Faculty of Dental Surgery. London.


