

## MYTHBUSTERS FOR WISE GUYS

The term “wisdom teeth” was coined in the olden days when the third molars erupted around age 18, which was considered the time one becomes an adult, thereby gaining a new level of wisdom. We still say age brings wisdom. While that may not always be true, as an orthodontist there’s one thing I know for sure - teen *age* (ITALIC age) brings *wisdom* (ITALIC wisdom) teeth concerns. Let’s play Mythbuster and separate fact from fiction.

Wisdom teeth are the most common to be congenitally missing – true or false? True. A recent study showed that approximately one person in five may lack one or more third molars. Don’t worry; you can still be a wise guy without them!

God gave us wisdom teeth so oral surgeons would have something to do – fact or fiction? Fiction, of course – I couldn’t resist.

Wisdom teeth cause front teeth to become crowded – real or myth? That myth is busted! Studies have shown it is simply coincidental. Patients who have congenitally missing wisdom teeth, or third molars, have the same amount of crowding in their late teenage years as those who have their third molars.

If wisdom teeth are erupting normally, space exists for them and they can be accessed well for brushing, then they can be left to come in as normal. However, impacted or partially erupted wisdom teeth will most likely cause problems in the future such as infection or cysts that are capable of damaging the roots of adjacent teeth and the nerves of the jawbone.

You don’t have to possess the wisdom of Solomon to know that the best way to discover whether the wisdom teeth should be removed is to see your dentist or orthodontist for an evaluation. He or she will take a panorex, or full mouth x-ray, to determine the best course of treatment.

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