

PERICORONITIS

TO YOUR HEALTH - PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT

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DESCRIPTION

Pericoronitis is an inflammation of the tissue surrounding the tooth. This condition is often associated with an impacted or partially erupted third molar or wisdom tooth. A partially erupted tooth may have a flap of gum tissue that will collect food particles and bacteria creating an inflammation sometimes leading to a gum infection.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Red swollen flap of gum tissue over the last molar tooth
- Pain present on chewing
- Bad smell or taste in the mouth
- Swollen jaw and possible tender and/or swollen lymph nodes in your neck or on that side
- Trismus (difficulty opening and closing mouth)
- Frequently you may have chills, fever, and general malaise
- Possible discharge of pus from the gum near the tooth

CAUSES

- Bacteria and food are allowed to collect and grow under the flap of soft tissue covering the last molar
- Irritation of the flap of gum tissue overlying the lower third molar by the cusps of the opposing tooth while chewing

PREVENTION

- Good oral hygiene making sure bacteria does not accumulate under gums or condition will recur
- Brushing, irrigating with a water pick, or rinsing with water after meals
- Remove wisdom teeth that are impacted, in poor position, or will not be able to fully erupt

TREATMENT

- Irrigation beneath the flap with saline or antiseptic solution may be done by the dentist
- Antibiotic therapy is sometimes initiated
- Condition may completely resolve but only if the tooth has enough space to fully erupt without pocketing
- Reducing the opposing cusp length may help alleviate some symptoms
- In some cases, the flap of tissue may be surgically removed
- Removal of opposing wisdom tooth may reduce gum irritation
- Removal of impacted tooth with inadequate space or poor position is often the recommended treatment

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