

Impacted Canine

You have been informed that you have **impacted canines**. Here are some simple Q & A's to help you.

What are impacted canines?

Canine teeth are known as 'eye teeth' or 'fangs'. They sit at the corners of your mouth. Two at the top, two at the bottom.

They can become stuck (impacted) in up to 1 in 100 people, though the success rate falls in older patients. Often the baby canine stays in place.

This x-ray shows an impacted canine in the roof of the mouth.



Why do canines become impacted?

No one knows why these teeth impact. Up to 3% of the population will have impacted canines and 85% of these are stuck under the gum in the roof of the mouth. Upper canines are more often impacted than lower.

Why are canines important?

They help give balance to the smile and tend to have less decay and gum problems. Where necessary other teeth make a perfectly good substitute for canine teeth.

What are the treatment options?

There are a number of options which will be discussed with you. The most suitable one will depend on - where your canine is, your age and whether you want to wear a fixed brace, on the amount of space available and how long the treatment may take.

Option 1 No treatment

- Leave the canine where it is as long as it is not causing any problems

- The tooth may have to be x-rayed occasionally by your dentist to check it is not causing problems.

Problems

- There is a small risk the buried tooth could damage the roots of the teeth next to it or a cyst may develop around the canine.
- The tooth may erupt when you are older.

What happens to the baby canine tooth?

- If the baby tooth is present it can be left but it may not last a lifetime.
- If the baby tooth is lost as an adult you will need to have the gap filled by your dentist with a bridge, denture or implant.

Option 2 An operation to uncover the buried tooth and to bring it into the correct position

- A small window of gum and bone is removed over the buried tooth.
- Sometimes a gold chain is attached to the tooth to help bring it into the mouth,
- Fixed braces are used to bring the tooth into line
- As part of the treatment plan you may need to have other teeth removed to make space for the canine.



Treatment Pathway

- You may need a special 3D x-ray to determine the best choice.
- You will need to see the surgeons to discuss the operation. This may mean going to a joint clinic, which runs once per month, if the canine is complicated.

What will the operation involve?

- The operation will either be under local or daycase general anaesthetic depending on how deeply the tooth is buried.
- Afterwards you will have stitches and maybe a dressing covering the tooth.
- You will need to keep the area very clean with mouthwashes and brushes. You also may need to take some mild painkillers.

How long will I have to wear a fixed brace for?

Moving an impacted canine is a very slow process and can take longer than 3. The wait for surgery will also usually mean a delay before the braces go on. You will have regular appointments with your orthodontist for the brace to be adjusted and the tooth to be guided down.

What will I feel?

The surgery itself will be quite sore for up to 1 week. During brace treatment it is normal for the teeth to be sore for 3-5 days including the buried tooth. More detail is found in the Fixed Appliances leaflet.

Will the treatment work?

Usually. In some cases, the buried tooth will not move. The chance of this is about 1 in a 150. If this happens the tooth will have to be removed and you will need further dental treatment to replace the tooth. This may mean having a fixed 'bridge' tooth, a dental implant or even using your brace to close the space if possible.

Option 3 An operation to remove the buried tooth completely

This option may be considered if

- You do not want to wear fixed braces
- The rest of your teeth are straight
- The buried tooth is in a poor position
- The buried tooth is causing problems

You may require further dental or orthodontic treatment in the future if this leaves you with a gap or a baby tooth.

Option 4 An operation to 'transplant' the buried tooth into its correct position.

This operation is not often considered as it is only suitable for certain cases. There must be enough space between the teeth for the transplant. It has a much lower success rate than the other options. However if this option is suitable, the orthodontist will discuss this with you.

Please remember every patient is different. This leaflet provides general information about the possible options for treatment.

Your orthodontist will discuss all options available with you in more detail.