



Pericoronitis

For your dental health.

What is Pericoronitis?

Pericoronitis is a red swelling of the soft tissues that surround the crown of a tooth that has only partially grown in (erupted). The swelling ranges from soft to firm. It can progress to become a knob-like mass of tissue that is very painful when you chew or open and close your mouth. It occurs most frequently around the third molars (the wisdom teeth), but can happen around the base of any tooth that hasn't grown in completely. It is most common in teens and young adults, and can cause severe pain, swelling, and spontaneous draining of the infection.



Pericoronitis results from a bacterial infection caused either by staphylococcal or streptococcal bacteria, or both. The condition is often brought on when there is an accumulation of plaque and/or tartar on the tooth, or food particles trapped in surrounding gum tissues.

In severe cases, pericoronitis can cause intense pain, fever, an increase in the number of white blood cells, and overall fatigue. The infection is capable of spreading into surrounding tissues. This results in cellulitis, a very serious, often life-threatening infection that must be treated quickly to prevent further spread and possible swelling of the airway.





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Treatment Options

Because this condition can spread significantly and develop into cellulitis, it's important that the treatment be swift and thorough.

- We will first remove all existing plaque, tartar, and other irritants from the tooth.
- Then, we will carefully remove any dead or damaged tissue.
- Frequently, rinsing the area with warm salt water can provide some relief and will help to keep it clean; mix one teaspoon of salt in one cup of warm water, and gently swish and spit.
- We may need to surgically recontour your gums or make an adjustment to the obstructed tooth.
- If cellulitis is present, it's essential that antibiotic therapy be started as soon as possible. We will first culture the infection to be certain that the bacteria causing the infection will be destroyed by the prescribed antibiotic.

