

[The Prophylactic Extraction of Wisdom Teeth: A Public Health Hazard](#)

[The Prophylactic Extraction of Third Molars: A Public Health Hazard](#)

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Ten million third molars (wisdom teeth) are extracted from approximately 5 million people in the United States each year at an annual cost of over \$3 billion.

In addition, more than 11 million patient days of “standard discomfort or disability”—pain, swelling, bruising, and malaise—result postoperatively, and more than 11000 people suffer permanent paresthesia—numbness of the lip, tongue, and cheek—as a consequence of nerve injury during the surgery. At least two thirds of these extractions, associated costs, and injuries are unnecessary, constituting a silent epidemic of iatrogenic injury that afflicts tens of thousands of people with lifelong discomfort and disability.

Avoidance of prophylactic extraction of third molars can prevent this public health hazard.