

# Impacted Canines

## What is it?

The canine is the third tooth from the middle tooth. It is called impacted if it does not come through into the mouth because it is either stuck or has grown in the wrong direction.

- How is it treated?**  
Normally it is necessary to place a fixed brace on the teeth and to open up room for the canine. Thereafter, a referral is made to a surgeon who carries out a procedure known as surgical exposure of the canine and bonding of an attachment and chain.
- What will the operation involve?**  
The operation will involve a general or local anaesthetic. After the operation you will have stitches in place and a chain that comes through the gum and is normally attached to the Orthodontic wire. You will be advised to keep the area clean and rinse with an antibacterial mouth rinse or a slightly warm salt water solution. You can take a painkiller if needed.
- At what age is this done?**  
Usually around age twelve to thirteen years when most of the teeth have already come through into the mouth. However, this may be later for some patients.
- How is the tooth brought into position?**  
This is done by the Orthodontist using the fixed brace by pulling on the chain. The canine gradually moves towards its desired position and a normal bracket is then placed on it.
- How long will I need to wear the brace?**  
Treatment to reposition an impacted canine can take around two years or longer. In some cases, it can take as long as four years.
- Is it important to treat?**  
A canine is an important tooth for both function and aesthetics. There is therefore a benefit of having an impacted canine treated
- Is the treatment always successful?**  
The success rate of treating impacted canine is very high. However, some canines are fused to the bone and do not move. This is known as ankylosis. If this happens, the tooth may need to be removed and you may require further dental treatment.
- Is there a risk of not treating an impacted canine?**  
Usually the chance of a risk is very low. However, the tooth may damage the adjacent teeth, it may develop a cyst or a tumour that is non-cancerous, and it may fuse to the bone. If you choose not to have treatment the tooth should be x-rayed every three years to rule out any problems.
- When is it best to remove the canine?**  
In situations where the tooth is positioned badly and there is a low chance of pulling it into place or if it is causing dental problems.
- Can the tooth be surgically repositioned?**  
Autotransplantation is a surgical procedure to move the tooth from a poor position to a better one. It is seldom carried out and the tooth usually has to be root treated.
- What can be done if the canine is missing or has to be removed?**  
In some cases it is possible for the Orthodontist to close the space and in other cases it is not. Replacing the missing tooth can involve a bridge or a dental implant. The Orthodontist and your dentist will discuss these options with you.

