Wisdom Teeth in Humans

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With all of the pain, time, and money that are put into dealing with wisdom teeth, humans have become just a little more than tired of these remnants from their large jawed ancestors. But regardless of how much they are despised, the wisdom teeth remain, and force their way into mouths regardless of the pain inflicted. There are two possible reasons why the wisdom teeth have become vestigial. The first is that the human jaw has become smaller than its ancestors -and the wisdom teeth are trying to grow into a jaw that is much too small. The second reason may have to do with dental hygiene. A few thousand years ago, it might be common for an 18 year old man to have lost several, probably most, of his teeth, and the incoming wisdom teeth would prove useful. Now that humans brush their teeth twice a day, it’s possible to keep one’s teeth for a lifetime. The drawback is that the wisdom teeth still want to come in, and when they do, they usually need to be extracted to prevent any serious pain.

1. A synonym for vestigial would be:
   A. necessary
   B. long
   C. serious
   D. nonfunctional

2. What are the two reasons the article states that humans no longer need wisdom teeth?

   1) ________________________________________________________________
      ________________________________________________________________

   2) ________________________________________________________________
      ________________________________________________________________
Changes In Ancient Humans’ Diet Made Wisdom Teeth Obsolete

Posted by Alyson Foster on November 23, 2011

Like the appendix, wisdom teeth are a somewhat mysterious part of the human anatomy. They don’t appear to serve much of a purpose — unless you count trips to the doctor and reasons for expensive, unpleasant medical procedures. According to the New York Times, millions of young people living in the United States have their wisdom teeth extracted every year, usually to prevent problems later on in life.

A new study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences sheds light on why human beings have wisdom teeth and why they cause us grief. The culprit seems to be the evolution of the human diet. Physical anthropologist Noreen von Cramon-Taubadel looked at skull specimens from 11 populations around the world and compared those groups that obtained their food through hunting and gathering with those whose diet was based on agriculture. She found that the hunter-gatherers had longer, narrower jawbones that were well-adapted for chewing hard substances — and roomy enough for wisdom teeth. The latter group, which ate more starches and cooked foods, chewed less and developed shorter, smaller jaws with less space for an extra set of molars.

This is yet another intriguing example of how culture and human biology intersect. And since those of us living in the post-industrial era are unlikely to give up our cereal and mashed potatoes, it seems we’ll just have to resign ourselves to our time in the dentist’s chair.

Origin:
The term ‘wisdom tooth’ has a surprisingly affectionate origin. As these teeth usually appear between the ages of 17 and 25 years, they are called this because it is an age at which many young people pursue higher education. These are your ‘wisdom’ years. In some cases, they develop a little later or not at all, but generally speaking, you can expect them at this time.