Pericoronitis Explained

Since 1982, Howard Sosna, DDS, has operated his own oral surgery private practice in Newton, New Jersey. Dr. Howard Sosna frequently sees patients for complications caused by impacted wisdom teeth, including [pericoronitis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pericoronitis).   
  
Most people’s jaws are not roomy enough to allow wisdom teeth to erupt fully and in perfect alignment. In many cases, these teeth, also called the third molars, remain trapped in the jaw or only come in partially. This is called an impaction. Partially erupted third molars often are surrounded by flaps of gum tissue that easily collect food particles and oral bacteria, leading to a condition called pericoronitis. Symptoms of pericoronitis include swollen gums, a bad taste in the mouth, bad breath, pain, and gum infection.  
  
Treatment of pericoronitis usually starts with rinsing the mouth with salt water to remove food debris caught in the gum flaps. If an infection occurs, antibiotics may be prescribed to get it under control and prevent it from spreading. If the third molar never fully breaks through the gums, pericoronitis will likely recur until the patient undergoes wisdom tooth extraction.