

Post-Operative Instructions Following Tooth Extraction

Center for Progressive Dentistry

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Our goal is for your healing process after an extraction to be as comfortable as possible. The removal of teeth is a surgical procedure, and post-operative care is imperative. Please follow all instructions carefully to avoid any unnecessary pain and complications.

If you have any difficulties or concerns following your surgery, please do not hesitate to call us or return to our office for a follow-up exam.

Immediately Following Surgery:

*Keep the gauze pad placed over the surgical area with pressure applied by biting down until the bleeding stops, usually 30-45 minutes. Change the gauze pad as needed.

*Take any prescribed pain medication as soon as you begin to feel discomfort. This will usually coincide with the local anesthetic becoming less effective.

* Do not suck on a straw, spit forcefully, or smoke. These actions may cause dislodging of the blood clot that is forming in the extraction socket and lead to a “dry socket.”

*Restrict your activities the day of surgery, and resume normal activity when you feel comfortable.

*Do not rinse your mouth for the first post-operative day or while there is bleeding. After the first day, gently use a warm salt water rinse approximately every 4 hours and especially after meals to flush out particles of food and debris that may lodge in the area.

Bleeding- A certain amount of bleeding is to be expected following a surgical procedure. Slight bleeding, oozing, or redness in the saliva is not uncommon. Bleeding is best controlled by the use of pressure. Bleeding is best controlled with direct pressure by biting a moist gauze pad firmly for 30 minutes. Repeat and change gauze pads if necessary. If bleeding has not decreased in 3-4 hours, bite on a dampened tea bag placed directly over the surgical site. The tannic acid in the tea helps the blood to clot.

Swelling- The amount of swelling that is normally expected after an extraction depends on the type of surgery. Swelling around the mouth, cheek, eyes, and side of the face is not uncommon. Swelling may occur up to 2-3 days post-surgery. You can help to minimize the swelling by applying ice packs to the affected area. For the first 3 hours, apply the ice packs directly to the area, alternating on for 20 minutes then off for 20 minutes. Anti-inflammatory medication, like Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), can also help reduce swelling. Do not take more than 800mg every 6 hours.

Pain- Post operative pain will be the most severe the first day after surgery. It is beneficial to take your pain medication before your numbness wears off. For mild to moderate pain, 600-800mg of Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) may be taken every 6 hours. You may also combine Ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) with Tylenol (Acetaminophen), not exceeding 3000mg of Tylenol in 24 hours. Depending on the procedure, prescription pain medication may be offered by your doctor. Please follow the specific prescription instructions carefully. DO NOT take the pain medication on an empty stomach as nausea may result. DO NOT combine the prescribed

medication with Tylenol. The prescribed medicine may make you drowsy. DO NOT drive an automobile or operate machinery, and AVOID alcoholic beverages. Pain or discomfort following surgery should subside more and more each day. If pain persists, it may require attention, and you should contact our office.

Antibiotics- If you have been placed on antibiotics, take the medicine as directed. Antibiotics may be prescribed to help prevent infection and treat an existing infection. Discontinue antibiotic use in the event of a rash or other unfavorable reaction. PLEASE NOTE: If you are currently taking birth control pills, they may be inactivated by the antibiotic.

Nausea and Vomiting- In the event of nausea and/or vomiting following surgery, DO NOT take anything by mouth for at least an hour, including the prescribed medication. You should then sip on water, tea, or juice. Sip slowly over a fifteen-minute period. When the nausea subsides, you can begin taking solid foods and the prescribed medication.

Sutures- If absorbable sutures were used, they will dissolve on their own in 7-14 days. It will not be necessary to return to the office for sutures to be removed. If sutures that require removal were placed, a follow up appointment should be set up for ~7 days later.

Activity- Over-exertion may start or intensify your pain. AVOID excessive work or play. It is not necessary to stay indoors following uncomplicated surgery. However, rest and minimal activity will help to minimize pain, swelling, and bleeding. Normal activity may be resumed the following day as tolerated.

Cleaning- Do not rinse or spit vigorously for the first 24 hours following surgery. You can brush your teeth the night of the surgery, but rinse gently and avoid the surgical site. The day after surgery, you should begin rinsing four times a day and after eating with warm salt water. Do this gently as to not dislodge the blood clot. DO NOT use a non-prescription rinse for 24 hours after surgery. Clean the rest of your mouth as usual.

Diet- AVOID hot food or liquid that could agitate the surgical site for the first few days following surgery. AVOID spicy food and foods that are very small that may become lodged in the area, i.e. rice, popcorn, nuts.

Special Considerations- Trismus (stiffness) in the face muscles may cause difficulty in opening your mouth for a period of days. This should resolve on its own. Do not over-exert your jaw muscles during this time which may prolong the condition. You may experience aching from other teeth. This discomfort is caused by referred pain and is a temporary condition. It is not unusual to develop facial bruising in the area of the extraction. There may be a slight elevation in temperature for 24-48 hours. If the fever persists, please contact our office.

Dry Socket- A “dry socket” is the loss of the blood clot in the socket. This condition creates a delayed healing at the extraction site and presents symptoms such as pain in the ear, chin, adjacent teeth, and jaw. The discomfort usually begins about the third or fourth day after the surgery and can last for many days. The cause of a dry socket is unknown, but it can be attributed to the difficulty of the surgery, increased age, medications (such as birth control pills), and especially smoking. Treatment is for the symptoms only.

Smoking- Smoking can contribute to multiple post-operative complications. Smoking can delay wound healing, and increase chances of infection and dry socket. It is advisable to STOP smoking for at least 1 week following oral surgery.