



Dental Specialty Center

WHAT TO DO AFTER YOU'VE HAD ORAL SURGERY

The following guidelines are designed to help make your postoperative recovery as smooth and stress-free as possible. Since the aftereffects of surgery may be minimal, not all of these instructions may apply. If there's anything you're not sure about, please call our office at any time. Our 24-hour answering service will contact the doctor on call after hours. Phone calls for narcotic or pain killer prescription renewals will only be accepted during our normal office hours.

THE DAY OF YOUR SURGERY

First Hour

Bite down gently but firmly on the gauze packs that have been placed over the areas that have been operated on, making sure that they remain in place. Do not change them for the first hour unless you continue to experience uncontrolled bleeding. If active bleeding persists after one hour, place enough new gauze to place sufficient pressure over the surgical site for another 30 to 60 minutes. The gauze may be changed as often as necessary and be dampened and/or fluffed for comfort.

Exercise Care

Do not disturb the surgical area. DO NOT rinse vigorously or probe the area with your fingers or any other objects. You may brush your teeth gently. PLEASE DO NOT SMOKE for at least 48 hours; smoking can interfere with the healing process and may cause a dry socket.

Oozing

Intermittent bleeding or oozing overnight is normal. Bleeding may be controlled by placing fresh gauze over the surgical areas; be sure to bite on the gauze for 30 to 45 minutes at a time.

Persistent Bleeding

If you are experiencing severe bleeding, chances are the packs are being clenched between your teeth rather than exerting proper pressure on the surgical areas. Try repositioning the packs. If the bleeding persists or becomes heavy, you may substitute a tea bag for 20 to 30 minutes; the tea bag should be soaked in hot water, squeezed damp-dry and wrapped in moist gauze. If the bleeding continues unabated, please call our office.

Swelling

Swelling is a common side effect of oral surgery. It can be minimized by firmly applying a cold pack, ice bag or bag of frozen peas wrapped in a towel to your face and cheek near the area that has been operated upon. This should be applied 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off during the first 12 to 24 hours after surgery. If you have been prescribed any medicine to control swelling, be sure to take it as directed.

Pain

Unfortunately, most oral surgery is accompanied by some degree of discomfort. You will usually be given a prescription for pain medication. If you take the first pill before the anesthesia has worn off, you should be able to better manage any discomfort. Some patients find that stronger pain medicine causes nausea; eating a small amount of food before you take a pain pill may help reduce the risk of nausea. The effects of pain medicines vary widely from one person to the next. If you are still experiencing discomfort, you may supplement each pain pill with an analgesic such as aspirin or ibuprofen. Some patients may require two of the pain pills at one time during the early stages of recovery. Remember that the most severe pain usually occurs within the first six hours after the local anesthesia wears off; your need for medicine should lessen after that. If you find that you are taking large amounts of pain medication at frequent intervals, please call our office. If you think you will need more prescription medication for the weekend, be sure to call for a refill during our normal weekly office hours.

Nausea

It's not usual to experience a degree of nausea after surgery. Sometimes it's caused by pain medications. Ingesting a small amount of food before taking a pill or taking the pill with a lot of water can help minimize nausea. We recommend drinking clear fluids; Classic Coca-Cola may also help. Try to keep the dosage of pain medications to a minimum. If you are still feeling nauseous, please call our office.

Diet

Help yourself to any nourishing food that you can eat without causing discomfort. Avoid extremely hot foods. Do not use a straw for the first few days after surgery. While it is not absolutely required, it may sometimes be advisable to confine your first day's intake to bland liquids or pureed foods such as creamed soups, puddings, yogurt and milk shakes. Try to avoid foods like nuts, sunflower seeds and popcorn that can get lodged in the socket areas. Over the next few days, you can gradually return to eating solid foods. Do not skip any meals. By getting the nourishment you need, you will feel better, gain strength and heal faster. If you are diabetic, maintain your normal eating habits or follow your doctor's instructions.

Sharp Edges

If you feel something hard or sharp edges in the surgical areas, it's probably the bony walls that once supported the extracted teeth. Occasionally small slivers of bone may work themselves out during the following week or so. If they cause you any concern or discomfort, please call our office.

Sinus Precautions

To avoid damaging your sinuses during the initial recovery period, please:

- Do not smoke
- Do not blow your nose
- Sneeze with your mouth open
- Do not suck air, food or liquid through a straw
- Avoid any alcoholic beverages

THE SECOND AND THIRD DAY AFTER YOUR SURGERY**Mouth Rinses**

It's essential to keep your mouth clean after surgery. Using one-quarter teaspoon of salt dissolved in an 8-ounce glass of warm water, gently rinse with a mouthful of the solution at a time; you should take five minutes to use the entire glassful. Repeat at least two or three times a day for the next five days.

Brushing

Begin your normal oral hygiene routine as soon after surgery as possible. While soreness and swelling may not permit vigorous brushing of all areas, please try to make every effort to clean your teeth as best as you can without causing any discomfort.

Hot Applications

Apply warm compresses such as a hot water bottle, moist hot towel or heating pad to the skin overlying areas of swelling for 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off. This will help soothe those tender areas as well as decrease swelling and stiffness.

Healing

The first two days after having teeth extracted are usually the most uncomfortable and are typically accompanied by some swelling. You should be feeling more comfortably by the third day; even though some swelling may still be present, you can usually begin a more substantial diet. As the days go by, you should continue to notice a gradual improvement; if you don't, please call our office.

If you are given a plastic syringe, DO NOT use it for the first five days. After that, you can use it on a daily basis according to the instructions until you are certain that the tooth socket has closed completely. That way you won't run the risk of having any food particles become lodged in the socket.