

# Post-Operative Instructions Following Tooth Extraction

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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 possible infection.

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.
- \*Take your 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, or smoke.
- \*Restrict your activities the day of surgery, and resume normal activity when you feel comfortable.
- \*Place ice packs on the side of your face where surgery was performed. Refer to the section on swelling for an explanation.
- \*For mild discomfort, use Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin). DO NOT take more than 800mg every 4-6 hours.
- \*Vigorous mouth rinsing or touching the affected area following surgery should be avoided. This may initiate bleeding caused by dislodging the blood clot that has formed. Do not rinse your mouth for the first post-operative day or while there is bleeding. After the first day, use a warm salt water rinse every 4 hours and after meals to flush out particles of food and debris that may lodge in the area.
- \*Restrict your diet to liquids and soft foods which are comfortable for you to eat.

**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. Excessive bleeding may be controlled by placing a gauze pad over the area and biting firmly for thirty minutes. Repeat 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. The swelling sometimes may not appear immediately, and it 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. Applying ice after 24 hours has no beneficial effect. If swelling or jaw stiffness has persisted for several days, there is no cause for alarm. If the swelling is significant, you may use a moist heat compresses to help suppress it.

**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 moderate pain, 800mg of Ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil) may be taken every 4-6 hours. For severe pain, take the prescribed medication that was provided. DO NOT take the pain medication on an empty stomach as nausea may result. 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. Discontinue antibiotic use in the event of a rash or other unfavorable reaction. PLEASE NOTE: If you are currently taking birth control pills, they will 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 any sutures were required, they will dissolve on their own in 7-10 days. It will not be necessary to return to the office for sutures to be removed.

**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. The day after surgery, you should begin rinsing four times a day and after eating. Do this gently as to not dislodge the blood clot. To rinse, mix a teaspoon of salt and a cup of warm water. DO NOT use a non-prescription rinse for 24 hours after surgery. Clean the rest of your mouth as usual.

**Diet-** It is advisable to eat only soft, non-spicy food for the first few days following surgery. AVOID hot food or liquid that could agitate the already inflamed area. AVOID rice, grits, and foods that are very small that may become lodged in the area.

**Special Considerations-** Trismus (stiffness) in the face muscles may cause difficulty in opening your mouth for a period of days. Moist heat compresses can minimize this 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 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 smoking. Treatment is for the symptoms only.