

General Post Operative Instructions

These are general instructions and not all of these instructions may apply to your recovery. Common sense will often dictate what you should do; however, when in doubt, follow these guidelines or call our office for clarification.

Bleeding

Bite down firmly but gently on the gauze packs that have been placed over the surgical area(s). Make sure that the gauze remains in place, undisturbed for 30 minutes, then reapply with clean gauze if needed. Light or intermittent oozing is normal for up to 48 hours and can last longer if you are taking blood thinners. Gauze should be removed for eating, drinking, and sleeping. If bleeding continues to be heavy while biting on gauze, the gauze is in the wrong position and not putting pressure on the bleeding site. Take the following steps:

1. Remove the wet gauze. Position new/dry gauze so pressure is applied directly on the bleeding site.
2. Bite on the gauze for 30 minutes without interruption. Repeat as needed.
3. Alternatively, you may use a moistened tea bag instead of gauze.

Pain

Unfortunately, most oral surgery procedures are accompanied by some degree of discomfort. There are many good strategies to get you through the process, though. Pain relievers should be taken before the numbness goes away. Over-the-counter medications like ibuprofen (Advil® or Motrin®) or acetaminophen (Tylenol®), if able to be taken, are adequate for minor procedures. For most procedures, we will prescribe post-operative pain medications. Taking your medications with adequate food and a good amount of water will decrease the chance of nausea. Due to adverse side effects (e.g. nausea, vomiting, risk of dependency) narcotics are not usually prescribed for common oral surgery procedures.

Antibiotics

Antibiotics are prescribed to treat or prevent infections, but are rarely needed after routine oral surgery. If they are prescribed, please take all of the medication as directed. If you experience any adverse reactions, such as nausea, rash, or itching, discontinue the medication. A rash or itching may indicate an allergic reaction to a medication. Antihistamines (Benadryl®) will usually counteract the hives, rash, and itching. Swelling of the lips or tongue or difficulty breathing may represent a more severe allergic reaction, and you should seek medical attention immediately.

Swelling

Swelling from oral surgery is normal and reaches its maximum in 48-72 hours. Keeping the head elevated with 2 pillows when lying down can minimize facial swelling. Swelling can also be minimized by applying a pressure dressing and cold compresses to your face (20 minutes on, 20 minutes off) for the first 48 hours. After 48 hours, warm compresses will help reduce the swelling. These should be continued (20 minutes on, 20 minutes off) until the swelling has subsided.

Rinsing and Spitting

Avoid rinsing the mouth for 24 hours after surgery. It may disturb the clot. The following day, you may begin using the prescribed mouthwash. If you were not prescribed a mouthwash, you may begin gently rinsing with lukewarm (not hot) salt water. Dilute 1 teaspoon of salt in 8 ounces of warm water and rinse gently for 1 minute 3-4 times a day for 1 week. Do not spit because this action can disrupt the blood clot and/or promote bleeding.

Brushing and Hygiene

Avoid brushing near the surgical sites since there may be stitches that can be disturbed, as well as some soreness and swelling. You may clean the surgical areas with gauze or cotton swabs dipped in saltwater. Begin a normal hygiene routine as soon as possible and gently brush the areas you are comfortable with.

Irrigation Syringe

It is normal to feel a hole (socket) after the tooth is removed and it may present a trap for food debris. If you have been given an irrigation syringe, start irrigating the lower sockets 5-7 days after the procedure if there is food debris trapping. Fill it with lukewarm water and gently use it to clean the socket. The socket will fill in from the bottom and after 6-8 weeks and food will no longer get stuck.

Diet

During the first 24 hours, eat cool/room temperature soups and soft foods that are easily chewed and swallowed. You may gradually progress to your normal diet over the next few days avoiding hard foods and seeds/nuts. Do not skip meals and be sure to drink adequate water to maintain good hydration. A nutritious, healthy diet is very important for proper recovery and healing. If you have diabetes, it is important to maintain your normal diet and maintain good blood glucose levels.

Nausea and vomiting

Taking pain medications with inadequate food and water intake is the most common reason for nausea and vomiting. Swallowing of blood tinged saliva can also be a cause. Please avoid these actions for best results.

Dry Socket

When a dry socket occurs, there is increasing pain that radiates to other areas of the jaw, teeth, and ear with an associated foul odor and dark granular debris. Symptoms of a dry socket will not occur until the third or fourth post-operative day, and it could result from loss of the blood clot in the socket. All the surrounding areas will look normal. Fortunately, dry sockets do not occur very often. If you believe you have a dry socket, please call our office, we have treatment modalities that may help.

Bruising

Sometimes bruising may occur 24 or 48 hours after surgery has been performed. Application of warm compresses to the involved area (30 minutes on, 30 minutes off) will expedite the healing process.

Smoking and Alcohol

Avoid smoking or chewing tobacco for 1 week after surgery. Alcohol should not be consumed while taking pain medication and/or antibiotics.

Sharp Bony Edges

If you feel something hard when you place your tongue on the surgical site, you may think it is part of your tooth. This is the hard, bony wall that originally supported the tooth. Leave it alone, and it will heal itself. Our interest in your care does not cease with the completion of the operation. If any difficulty arises at any time, please call us, and we will see you for treatment.

After Hour Contact

If you are experiencing a medical emergency, please dial 911 or visit an urgent care facility. For routine post operative questions, please call our office during office hours. If needed, an on call assistant can be reached after hours by calling our main office phone number and choosing option #2. Please allow at least 1 hour for return of call.

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