

Tooth Extraction Post-Op Instructions

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

The First Hour After Surgery

Bite down firmly, but gently on the folded gauze pack that has been placed over the surgical area(s). Make sure that the gauze remains in place, undisturbed for 30 minutes, then reapply with clean gauze. **Direct pressure** of the gauze on the site helps control bleeding. You can also use a damp cool black tea bag in place of the gauze if bleeding persists.

Please **DO NOT** eat, drink, or sleep with gauze in your mouth.

If you experience continued heavy bleeding while biting on the gauze, it means the gauze is in the wrong position and not pressing on the extraction site. Repeat the following steps:

1. Remove gauze.
2. Reposition gauze or tea bag so that pressure is applied to the bleeding site.
3. Bite on the gauze for 30 minutes to 1 hour.

Bleeding and Oozing

Some oozing is normal for up to 24 hours and can last longer if you are taking blood thinners. The blood will mix with saliva, so it is important to determine if there is active bleeding. The above instructions can be repeated, and then the gauze can be discontinued when the bleeding has subsided. Do not go to sleep with any gauze in your mouth.

Discomfort

Unfortunately, most oral surgery procedures are accompanied by some degree of discomfort, which peaks 2-3 days following the procedure. There are many good strategies to get you through the process, though. Some form of pain reliever should be taken **before** the numbness goes away. Over-the-counter medications like **ibuprofen (Advil® or Motrin®)** or/and **acetaminophen (Tylenol®)** are adequate if there are no allergies, they have been tolerated in the past, and they do not interfere with any other medications.

For more involved procedures, a narcotic may be prescribed. The narcotic can also be alternated or taken in addition to ibuprofen.

Taking your medications with food will decrease the chance of nausea. If taking narcotic pain medication, do NOT drive, operate, heavy, drink alcohol or combine with other sedative medications (cold medications, sleeping pills, muscle relaxants, etc).

Swelling

Swelling is normal after oral surgery and peaks **2-3 days** after the surgery. Keeping the **head elevated** with 2 pillows when lying down can minimize facial swelling. Swelling can also be minimized by applying cold compresses/ice to your face every hour (30 minutes on, 30 minutes off) for the first 48 hours. Wrap the ice in a light towel so that it is not directly on the skin. After 48 hours, warm compresses will help reduce the swelling. These should be continued (30 minutes on, 30 minutes off) until the swelling has subsided.

Brushing

Avoid brushing near the surgical sites the **day of surgery**, since there may be stitches that can be disturbed, as well as some soreness and swelling. Let tooth paste drip out of your mouth the first day; **AVOID** forceful spitting. **Please brush teeth at least twice a day following surgery.** Adequate oral hygiene is important to your recovery.

Begin your normal hygiene routine as soon as possible and gently brush the areas you are comfortable with.

DO NOT spit because this action can disrupt the blood clot and/or promote bleeding.

Rinsing

Avoid rinsing the mouth for **24 hours** after surgery. It may disturb the clot. The following day, you may begin gently rinsing with warm (not hot) salt water. Dilute 1 teaspoon of salt in 8 ounces of warm water and rinse gently 3 or 4 times a day for 1 week. Let the rinse run out of your mouth/no spitting. **AVOID** commercial mouthwashes and peroxide rinses as they may break down clot or slow down healing.

Irrigation Syringe

If you have been given an irrigation syringe, start using **1 week** after the procedure. Fill it with warm water and use gently to clean the socket. The socket will be closing up from the bottom. After 3 or 4 weeks and food will no longer get stuck. It is normal to feel a hole after the tooth is removed, and this will eventually heal completely, and bone will fill in the socket.

Antibiotics

Antibiotics **may** be prescribed to treat or prevent infections. If antibiotics are prescribed take all of the medication as directed. If you experience any adverse reactions, such as nausea, rash, or itching, discontinue the 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. If you are taking birth control, you should use a back-up method of birth control until your next menstrual cycle as some antibiotics decrease the effectiveness of oral contraceptives.

Rest

Avoid exercising or other strenuous activity which may promote bleeding or increase swelling for 3-4 days following surgery. For patients who have had sedation, **DO NOT drive**, operate heavy machinery or make important decision for 24 hours.

All children should be well supervised by an adult for 24 hours following sedation.

Most children with simple extractions can return to school and normal activity the next day.

Diet

Be **CAREFUL** eating and drinking until the local anesthetic **has worn off** as you may spill or accidentally bite your lip or tongue. A nutritionally balanced diet is very important.

Soft Diet Instructions

During the first 24 hours, your diet should consist of soft foods that are easily chewed and swallowed such as:

- Colas, Ginger Ale, Cottage Cheese, Baby Food (no chunks)
- Milkshakes, Protein/Ensure Shakes, Mashed Potatoes, Scrambled Eggs, Pasta, Soup (lukewarm)
- Yogurt (no chunks of fruit), Jell-O® (no fruit pieces), Milk
- Ice Cream, Sherbet, Frozen Yogurt, Pudding, Custard, Apple Sauce, Homemade Pureed Food

Avoid any foods that contain nuts, seeds, popcorn, rice, corn, or chips.

All food and drink should be consumed chilled/cool until the numbness wears off.

Do not use a straw for 1 week as this may disturb the blood clot and/or promote bleeding.

You may **gradually progress to solid foods** over the next few days. Do not skip meals. By eating nutritious meals regularly, you will feel better, gain strength, have less discomfort, and heal faster.

Nausea

Drink a carbonated beverage, such as ginger ale or cola, every 30 minutes until nausea subsides. You may also eat saltine crackers to help alleviate symptoms. If nausea persists, please call our office.

Dry Socket

When a dry socket occurs, there is constant pain that radiates to other areas of the jaw, teeth, and ear. Symptoms of a dry socket will not occur until the third or fourth post-operative day, and it results from a loss of the blood clot in the socket. This is similar to a scab pulling off the skin. All the surrounding areas will look normal. If you do not have improvement after the first few days following the procedure, please call the office. A medicated dressing may need to be placed to resolve the discomfort.

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.

If you have **questions or concerns**, please feel free to reach out to Dr. Kirkpatrick during office hours or after hours through the answer services at **724-779-7999**.