

## Oral Surgery Post-Op Instructions

Oral surgery wounds typically heal quickly and without complication if simple precautions are taken. Sometimes the after-effects of oral surgery are quite minimal, so not all of the following instructions may apply. Common sense will often dictate what you should do; however, when in doubt follow these guidelines or call our office for clarification.

### Day of Surgery

**The First Few Hours:** Bite down gently but firmly on the gauze packs that have been placed over the surgical areas making sure they remain in place. Do not change them for the first hour unless the bleeding is not controlled. The packs may be gently removed after one hour. If active bleeding persists, place enough new gauze over the surgical site to maintain pressure on the site for another 30-60 minutes. The gauze may then be changed as necessary, typically every 30-45 minutes. It is best to moisten the gauze with water prior to placing it over the surgical site.

**Wound Care:** A good blood clot will help healing. Do not disturb the surgical site for 24 hours. Do not rinse vigorously or probe the area with any objects. You may brush your teeth gently, but avoid the surgical site. Avoid vigorous exercise for the first several days. If you smoke, please do not smoke for at least 48 hours since this is detrimental and may cause a dry socket. Avoid alcohol for the next several days.

**Oozing:** Intermittent bleeding or oozing overnight is normal. This may be controlled by placing fresh gauze over the areas and biting down on the gauze for 30-45 minutes at a time.

**Persistent Bleeding:** Bleeding should never be severe. If so, it usually means that the gauze packs are being clenched between the teeth only and are not exerting pressure on the surgical site. Try repositioning the gauze packs. If bleeding persists or becomes heavy, you may substitute a tea bag (soaked in hot water, squeezed to damp/dry, and wrapped in moist gauze) for 20-30 minutes. If bleeding remains uncontrolled, please call our office.

**Swelling:** Oral surgery is often associated with post-operative swelling which can be minimized by using a cold pack, ice bag, or a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a towel and applied firmly to the cheek for 20-minutes on and off during the first 24 hours after surgery. It is especially important to do this for the first few hours after surgery. If you have been prescribed medication for the control of swelling, be sure to take it as directed. Immediate and constant gauze compression on the wound and between the gum and cheek, firm yet gently pressure on the cheek with an ice pack, and elevation of the head are the best ways to minimize swelling.

**Pain:** Unfortunately, most oral surgery is accompanied by some degree of discomfort depending on the procedure and the patient. You will usually have a prescription for pain medication. If you take the first pill just before the anesthetic has worn off, you should be able to manage the discomfort better. The effects of pain medication vary widely among individuals. If you do not achieve adequate pain relief at first, you may supplement each pain pill with an analgesic such as ibuprofen. *Remember that the most severe pain is usually within six hours after the local anesthetic wears off.* After that, your need for pain medication should lessen with time. If you find yourself needing to take large amounts of pain medication at frequent intervals, please call our office. Also, do not drive or operate heavy machinery while taking this medication.

If you received any kind of sedation for your appointment, you should rest for the remainder of the day. During recovery time (typically 24 hours, though this may be longer for some people) you should not drive, operate complicated machinery or devices or make important decisions such as signing any legally binding documents, etc.

**Nausea:** Nausea is not uncommon after surgery. Sometimes pain medications are the cause. Nausea can be reduced by preceding each pain pill with a small amount of soft food and taking the pill with a large amount of water. If necessary, our office can prescribe a medication to reduce the nausea for you.

**Diet:** Eat any nourishing food that can be taken with comfort. Avoid extremely hot or cold foods. Do not use a straw for the first few days after surgery. It is usually advisable to confine the first few days' intake to liquids or pureed foods (soups, pudding, yogurt, milk, fruit shakes, etc.). Avoid hard foods, which may become lodged in the socket areas. Over the next several days you may gradually progress to solid foods. If you are diabetic, maintain your normal eating habits or follow instructions given by your doctor.

**Sharp Edges:** If you feel something hard or a sharp edge in the surgical area, it is likely that you are feeling the bony walls which once supported the extracted teeth. Sometimes small slivers of bone may work themselves out during the following week or so. If they cause concern or discomfort, please call our office.

### **Instructions For The Next Few Days**

**Mouth Rinses:** Keeping your mouth clean after surgery is essential. Use ¼ teaspoon of salt dissolved in 8 oz of warm water and gently rinse your mouth with portions of the solution. Repeat as often as you like, but at least two to three times daily preferably after meals for one week after surgery. Avoid commercial mouth rinses as many of them contain alcohol.

**Brushing:** Begin your normal oral hygiene routine as soon as possible after surgery, normally the day after. Soreness and swelling may not permit vigorous brushing, but please make every effort to clean your teeth within the bounds of comfort.

**Healing:** The first two days after surgery are generally the most uncomfortable and there is usually some swelling and/or bruising in the affected areas. On the third day you should be more comfortable and although still swollen, can usually begin a more substantial diet. The remainder of the post-operative period should be a steady gradual improvement. If you don't see continued improvement, please call our office.

**Dry Socket:** This is an occasional complication after tooth extraction, especially lower molars. It is caused by the blood clot dissolving too early and is identified by increased pain/discomfort after the first few days of normal healing. While the process is self-limiting, it can be uncomfortable. Please call our office as soon as possible so we can treat you and relieve your pain.

### **Common Temporary Post-Operative Symptoms:**

- Jaw stiffness with difficulty in opening
- A slight earache on the side of the surgery
- The other teeth may ache. This is 'sympathetic' or 'referred' pain from the extraction site
- The corners of your mouth may be dried, cracked, or bruised. Use cream or ointment to keep the area moist & to promote healing.
- Black & blue discolorations or bruising may occur on the face in the area of surgery. This should resolve itself within several days.
- There may be slight elevation of body temperature for 24-48 hours. If temperature persists, please call our office.

### **Remember, you just had a surgical operation. Be kind to yourself!**

It is our desire that your recovery be as smooth and pleasant as possible. Following these simple instructions will assist you in your recovery, but if you have any questions or concerns about your progress, please call our office.