

# Home Care Instructions for Surgical Extractions



## Anesthetics

The length of time you experience numbness varies, depending on the type and amount of anesthetic you've received and the area that was anesthetized. While your mouth is numb, you'll want to be careful not to bite your cheek, lip or tongue. The *numbness should subside within a few hours*. If it doesn't contact your dentist.

## Bleeding

A gauze pack may be placed on the extraction site to limit your bleeding and confine the blood while clotting takes place. This gauze pack should be left in place for 30-45 minutes after you leave the dentist's office. Do not chew on the pack. There may be some bleeding or oozing after the pack is removed. If so follow this procedure:

- Fold 2-3 pieces of clean gauze into a pad thick enough to bite on. Dampen the pad with clean, warm water and place it directly on the extraction site.
- Apply moderate pressure by closing the teeth firmly over the pad. Maintain this pressure for about 30 minutes. If the pad becomes soaked with blood, replace it with a clean one as necessary.
- Do not suck on the extraction site.
- A slight amount of blood may leak from the extraction site until a clot forms. However, if heavy bleeding continues, call the dentist. (Be aware, a little bit of blood mixed with a lot of saliva can look like more bleeding than is actually occurring).

## The Blood Clot

After an extraction, a blood clot forms in the tooth socket. This clot is an important part of the normal healing process. You should avoid activities that might disturb this clot. Here's how to protect it:

- For the first 72 hours: Do not smoke, Do not drink alcohol, Do not drink through a straw, Do not yell. These activities can dislodge or contaminate the clot and delay healing or increase discomfort.

- Limit strenuous activity and exercise for at least the first 48 hours to two weeks or longer. This will prevent increased blood flow that may dislodge the clot and increase discomfort.

Sometimes the blood clot does not form or after forming dissolves or is lost resulting in sharp, deep bone pain, this is called *osteitis* or 'dry socket'. Unfortunately the only treatment for dry socket is pain management and time. Eventually the body will heal the discomfort will pass. Please contact the dentist if you believe you have a dry socket.

## Medication

If the dentist prescribes medication to control pain or treat infection, use it only as directed. If the pain medication prescribed does not seem to work for you, do not increase the number of doses you take or decrease the interval between doses. Call the dentist. If you have any other difficulties or allergic reactions with the medication stop the medication immediately and call the dentist.

**For mild or average pain:** Tylenol or Ibuprofen (Advil) should be used. Combining both Tylenol and Ibuprofen at the same time or alternating between the two every three hours is a good way to manage pain without resorting to narcotic medications.

**For more severe pain:** A narcotic medication may be necessary, this may be combined with Tylenol &/or Ibuprofen (Advil). DO NOT take medications on an empty stomach, this will increase risks of nausea and vomiting. Best to eat a little at a time throughout the day. Do not take more than is prescribed. For your safety while on Narcotic pain medications--Do not operate machinery, drive a motor vehicle, consume alcohol or take more than the recommended dosage. Prolonged usage of any narcotic medication can result in addiction and decreased future effectiveness.

## Swelling and Discomfort

After a tooth is removed, you may have some discomfort and notice some swelling &/or bruising. This is a normal injury response reaction. You can help reduce swelling and pain by immediately applying a cold compress to the area. Apply for 3-5 minutes then off or the other side for 3-5 minutes at a time as to not overly 'freeze' your cheek tissues. While swelling to a various degree is normal, excessive

swelling, especially in conjunction with a bad taste or drainage from the extraction site may be a result of contamination or a secondary infection developing. Contact the dentist for a free follow-up examination, an irrigation and/or an antibiotic prescription may be given to help elevate the developing situation.

In rare instances post operative complications can be life threatening. Prolonged or severe swelling, bleeding, fever, nausea or vomiting that interferes with your airway is a life threatening emergency—go directly to an emergency room.

## Diet

After extractions, drink lots of liquids and eat soft, nutritious calorie-rich foods. One of main reasons patients feel sick is due to a lack of energy/nutrition due to lack of eating. Eat continuously, a little at a time, throughout the day. Avoid hot liquids and alcoholic beverages. Begin eating solid more complex foods as you feel able. Fresh smoothies (eaten with a spoon-no straws) or frozen fruit popsicles are both nutritious and feels good on the extractions.

## Cleaning Your Mouth

Do not clean the teeth next to the extraction site the first day. You should, however, brush and floss all the other teeth in your mouth thoroughly as well as your tongue. This will reduce bacteria build-up and potential contamination, also reducing 'bad breath' or any unpleasant tastes that are common after extractions.

The following day, begin gently rinsing your mouth with warm salt water (half a teaspoon salt in an 8 oz. glass of warm water). Avoid using mouthwash during this early healing period unless the dentist specifically advises you to do so. Salt water rinsing each morning and after meals is very important to keep the area clean from contamination, but remember to do it gently, too vigorous and you could disrupt the forming clot.

## Follow-Up

If you have sutures that require removal, schedule an appointment to have them removed in about a week. Any questions or concerns at all, do not hesitate to call our office or return for a free post-operative evaluation.