



POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

Sometimes the after-effects of oral surgery are quite minimal, so not all of the instructions may apply to you. Common sense will often dictate what you should do. However, when in doubt, follow these guidelines or call our office for clarification. Our number is **(360) 695-2400**.

DAY OF SURGERY:

FIRST HOUR: 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 (moistened with tap water) gauze to obtain pressure over the surgical site for another hour. The gauze may be changed as necessary (typically hourly).

OOZING: Some oozing is not uncommon for the first 2-4 hours after surgery. Intermittent bleeding or oozing overnight is normal. Bleeding may be controlled by placing fresh gauze over the areas and biting moistened gauze for one hour at a time.

PERSISTENT BLEEDING: Bleeding should never be severe (fill a coffee cup full of blood in 10 minutes is severe). If so, it usually means that the packs are being clenched between the teeth only and are not exerting pressure on the surgical areas. Try repositioning the packs. If bleeding persists or becomes heavy you may **substitute a damp teabag** for 20-30 minutes. If bleeding remains uncontrolled, please call our office.

SWELLING: Swelling is often associated with oral surgery. It 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 adjacent to the surgical area. This should be applied ten minutes on and ten minutes off during the first 24 hours. Sleeping with your head elevated on a stack of pillows or in a recliner will help with any throbbing in the surgical areas.

EXERCISE CARE: Do not disturb the surgical area today. Do NOT probe the area with any objects. PLEASE DO NOT SMOKE, rinse vigorously, suck on straws, or spit for at least 4 days since this is very detrimental to healing and may cause a dry socket. On the fifth day you may rinse vigorously.

ORAL HYGIENE: Continue to brush and floss the teeth which were NOT involved in the surgery (or covered by periodontal dressing.) **The surgical area should not be disturbed for the first week post-surgically.** However, you may rinse gently with salt water or a mouthwash if prescribed by your surgeon. After your sutures have been removed generally after 1-2 weeks (unless they are the resorbable kind), you should lightly clean the teeth using a soft tooth brush or as instructed by your surgeon.

DRESSING: If you have a periodontal dressing or “bandage” that is often used to cover the surgical area for 1-2 weeks after surgery, this dressing will be placed around your teeth to protect the surgical area and must not be disturbed. If small pieces become lost and you have no discomfort, there is no cause for concern. If large pieces break off or if the entire dressing becomes loose in the first 2-4 days, contact your surgeon.

PAIN: Unfortunately most oral surgery is accompanied by some degree of discomfort. You will usually have a prescription for pain medications. If you start with **600mg of Ibuprofen, Motrin or Advil every 6 hours (even through the night) for the initial 1-3 days after surgery**, then you need less of the prescription pain medication. Should the Ibuprofen not be sufficient for pain management then take your prescription pain medication in addition to Ibuprofen as needed. Some patients find that a stronger pain medicine causes nausea, but if you precede each pain pill with a small amount of food, chances for nausea will be reduced.

The effects of pain medications vary widely among individuals. Some patients may even require two of the pain pills at one time. Remember that the most severe pain is usually within six hours after the local anesthetic wears off; after that your need for medicine should lessen. If you find you are taking large amounts of pain medicine at frequent intervals, please call our office. If you anticipate needing more prescription medications for the weekend, you must call for a refill during the weekday business hours.

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 volume of water. Try to keep taking clear fluids and minimizing dosing of pain medications, but call us if you do not feel better. Classic Coca-Cola may help with nausea.

DIET: Eat only nourishing food that can be taken with comfort. Avoid extremely hot foods. Do not use a straw for the first 4 days after surgery. It is sometimes advisable that you confine the first few day's intake to soft mushy foods (soups, puddings, yogurt, mashed potatoes.) It is best to avoid foods with small particles such as nuts, seeds, rice, popcorn, etc., which may get lodged in the surgical areas. Anything you can put into a blender is also advisable. Over the next several days you may gradually progress to solid foods. It is important not to skip meals! If you take nourishment regularly you will feel better, gain strength, have less discomfort and heal faster. If you are a diabetic, maintain your normal eating habits or follow instructions given by you doctor.

SHARP EDGES: If you feel something hard or sharp edges in the surgical areas after an extraction, you are likely feeling the bony walls which once supported the extracted teeth. Please avoid irritating the area with your tongue or fingers as it will inhibit healing. Occasionally small slivers of bone may work themselves out during the following week or so. If they cause concern or discomfort, please call the office.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE SECOND AND THIRD DAYS

MOUTH RINSES: Keeping your mouth clean after surgery is essential. Use 1/2 teaspoon of salt dissolved in an 8 ounce glass of warm water and gently rinse with portions of the solution taking five minutes to use the entire glassful. Do not swallow the solution. Repeat as often as you like, but at least two to three times daily, especially after meals. It is also helpful to rinse with a non alcoholic mouthwash once in the morning and once at night to keep bacteria levels down in surgical areas during the healing process.

BRUSHING: Begin your normal oral hygiene routine as soon as possible after surgery. Soreness and swelling may not permit vigorous brushing, but please make every effort to clean your teeth within the bounds of comfort, being careful to avoid any stitches you may have.

HOT APPLICATIONS: You may apply warm compresses to the outside of your face over the areas of swelling (hot water bottle, hot moist towels, heating pad) for 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off to help soothe tender areas. This will also help decrease swelling and stiffness.

HEALING: Normal healing after tooth extraction should be as follows: The first two days after surgery are generally the most uncomfortable and there is usually some swelling. 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 course should be a gradual, steady improvement.** If you don't see continued improvement, please call our office. Dull throbbing can be normal signs after extractions if you are eating food that is too chewy and you should cut back to softer foods for a while. Sharp pain running along the jaw line, sometimes accompanied with a foul taste can be signs of dry-socket. This can sometimes mock an ear-ache. If this occurs, please contact our office.

It is our desire that your recovery be as smooth and pleasant as possible. Following these instructions will assist you, but if you have questions about your progress, please call the office. A 24-hour answering service is available to contact the doctor after hours if it is an emergency. Calling during office hours will afford a faster response to your question or concern. **PLEASE NOTE: Telephone calls for narcotic (pain killer) prescription renewal are ONLY accepted during office hours.**