



POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

DAY OF SURGERY

FIRST HOUR: Bite down firmly on the gauze packs that have been placed over the surgical area(s). Do not change them for the first 45 minutes unless the bleeding is not controlled and the gauze gets saturated. The packs may be gently removed after 45 minutes. If active bleeding persists, place enough new gauze to obtain pressure over the surgical site(s) for another 30 minutes. The gauze may then be changed as necessary (typically every 30 to 45 minutes). It is best to lightly moisten the gauze with tap water and loosely fluff for more comfortable positioning.

EXERCISE CARE: Do not disturb the surgical area(s) today. Do **NOT** rinse vigorously or probe the area(s) with any objects. You may brush your teeth gently. **PLEASE DO NOT SMOKE** for at least 48 hours, since this is very detrimental to healing and may cause a dry socket. If a surgical packing was placed in the surgical area(s) try to leave it alone. However, if it gets dislodged or falls out do not get alarmed and notify our office during normal business hours.

PERSISTENT BLEEDING: Bleeding should never be severe. If so, it likely means that the packs are not exerting pressure on the surgical area(s). Try repositioning the packs. If bleeding persists you may **substitute a tea bag** (soaked in warm water, squeezed damp-dry and wrapped in a moist gauze) for 20 or 30 minutes. The tannic acid in the tea bag helps to form a clot by contracting bleeding vessels. 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 external cheek(s) or area(s) adjacent to the surgical area(s). This should be applied 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off during the first 36 hours after surgery. If you have been prescribed medicine for the control of swelling (steroids), be sure to take it as directed.

PAIN: **If you take the first pill before the anesthetic has worn off, you should be able to manage any discomfort better.** Some patients find that pain medicine causes nausea, but if you precede each pain pill with a small amount of food, chances for nausea will be reduced. If you do not achieve adequate relief at first, you may supplement each pain pill with the over the counter analgesic Ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil). Ibuprofen comes in 200mg tablets: take 2-3 tablets every 4-6 hours as needed. Avoid alcoholic beverages. **If you find you are taking large amounts of pain medicine at frequent intervals, please call our office. If you anticipate needing more prescription medication for the weekend, you must call for a refill during 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. Classic Coca Cola or Ginger Ale may also help with nausea.

DIET: Eat any nourishing food that can be taken with comfort. Avoid hot foods for the first day or two. Do not use a straw for the first few days after surgery. It is sometimes advisable, but not absolutely required, to confine the first day's intake to liquids or pureed foods (soups, puddings, yogurt, milk shakes, etc.) It is best to avoid foods like nuts, sunflower seeds, popcorn, etc., which may get lodged in the surgical area(s). 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. Also, make sure that you are drinking at least 6-8 glasses of fluids a day. If you are a diabetic, try to maintain your normal eating habits and closely monitor your blood sugar.

SHARP EDGES: If you feel something with hard or sharp edges in the surgical area(s), it is likely you are feeling the bony walls which once supported the extracted teeth. 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.

ANTIBIOTICS: If you have been placed on antibiotics, take the medication as directed. Antibiotics are given to help prevent infection. Discontinue antibiotic use in the event of a rash or other unfavorable reaction. Call the office if you have any questions. Antibiotics can also reduce the effectiveness of birth control. If you are taking birth control use another form of contraception for one entire menstrual cycle after you finish taking the antibiotics.

DENTURES INSERTED DURING SURGERY: If your dentist fabricated a denture for you which was placed during the surgery, only take out the denture for 5 minutes at a time to rinse it 3 to 4 times a day for the first 48-72 hours following surgery. Leaving the denture out of your mouth for longer than 5 minutes could result in swelling which will prevent the denture from fitting back into your mouth. Please notify your dentist a day or two after surgery and schedule an adjustment appointment with them. If immediate dentures have been inserted, sore spots may develop. In most cases, your dentist will see you after surgery and make the necessary adjustments to relieve those sore spots. Failure to do so may result in severe denture sores, which may prolong the healing process.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE SECOND AND THIRD DAYS

MOUTH RINSES: Keeping your mouth clean after surgery is essential. Use 1/4 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. Repeat as often as you like, but at least two or three times daily (especially after meals).

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 and mouth within the bounds of comfort. If you had a dental implant placed there may be a metal healing abutment protruding through the gingival (gum) tissue. It is OK to gently brush this healing abutment to keep it clean.

HOT APPLICATIONS: You may apply warm compresses to the skin over the area(s) 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, stiffness and/or bruising.

ACTIVITY: Keep physical activities to a minimum immediately following surgery. If you are considering exercise, throbbing and/or bleeding from the surgical site(s) may occur. If this occurs, you should discontinue exercising. Be aware that your normal nourishment intake is likely reduced. Exercise may weaken you. If you get light headed, stop exercising.

NORMAL HEALING AFTER AN EXTRACTION: 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 gradual, steady improvement.** If you don't see continued improvement, please call our office. If you are given a plastic irrigating syringe, **DO NOT** use it for the first five days. Then use it daily according to the instructions until you are certain the tooth socket has closed completely and that there is no chance of any food particles lodging in the socket.

POSTOPERATIVE CONDITIONS WHICH MAY OCCUR:

- The area(s) operated on can swell reaching a maximum in 2-3 days. Swelling and discoloration around the eye, cheeks, or neck may occur. The application of a moist warm towel will help eliminate the discoloration quicker. The towel should be applied continuously for as long as tolerable beginning 36 hours after surgery (remember ice packs are used for the first 36 hours only).
- A sore throat may develop. The muscles of the throat are near the surgical site(s). Swelling into the throat muscles can cause pain. This is normal and should start to subside in 2-3 days.
- If the corners of the mouth are stretched, they may dry out and crack. Your lips should be kept moist with an ointment like Vaseline.
- There may be a slight elevation of your temperature for 24-48 hours. If a temperature continues for 3-4 days please notify our office.
- If numbness of the lip, chin, or tongue occurs there is no cause for alarm. As stated before surgery, this is usually temporary in nature. You should be aware that if your lip or tongue is numb, you could bite it and not feel the sensation. So be careful. Please call our office if you have prolonged numbness.
- You should be careful going from the lying down position to standing. You were not able to eat or drink prior to surgery. Taking pain medications can also make you dizzy. You could get light headed when you stand up suddenly. Before standing up, you should sit for one minute then get up.
- Stiffness (Trismus) of the jaw muscles may cause difficulty in opening your mouth for a few days following surgery. This is a normal post-operative event which will resolve in time.

It is our desire that your recovery be as smooth and pleasant as possible. Following the above instructions will assist you, but if you have questions about your progress, please call our office at 912-764-4495. Someone is always available to assist you and/or contact the doctor if needed. Calling during office hours will afford a faster response to your question or concern but we are always available anytime to help you.