

GENERAL POST OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

What do I do when I get home?

1. **Bite down firmly on the gauze packs placed over the surgical areas. *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 a new folded gauze directly over the sites and bite down to hold firm pressure for another 30 minutes. *(See below for more information on bleeding)*
2. **Begin ice packs wrapped in a washcloth to the outside of your face for 20 minutes on/20 minutes off.** Starting the day after surgery, switch to warm compresses for 20 minutes on /20 minutes off to reduce swelling. *(See back for more information on swelling)*
3. **Eat soft foods and drink plenty of fluids.** Fluid intake is very important to stay hydrated. However, **NO STRAWS for 2 weeks.** *(See back for more information on diet)*
4. **Start pain medication within 2-3 hours of getting home before the numbness has worn off.** It is important to have food on your stomach first, even if it's just a few bites to help prevent nausea. *(See below for more information on pain management and nausea)*
5. **Begin your antibiotic (if prescribed) that evening with food and take as directed until gone.**
6. **You may begin gently brushing teeth the day after surgery, however, avoid the surgical sites. No vigorous swishing or spitting. DO NOT USE THE MEDICATED MOUTH RINSE UNTIL THE DAY AFTER SURGERY.** You will then continue the mouth rinse twice daily for 1-2 weeks or until healed.

How do I manage the bleeding after surgery?

Fold one piece of gauze in half, then in half again, creating a firm pad and place directly on the surgical site(s). Use firm biting pressure where possible, or direct finger pressure by holding the gauze. Ensure the gauze is not just between teeth or pressure will not be applied to the socket(s). You may moisten the gauze with cold water and ring it out well to help with positioning. Keep your head elevated. ***Do not disturb the gauze for 30-45 minutes.*** Changing the gauze too frequently can prolong oozing. You may have to repeat this process several times until blood is no longer pooling in the mouth. Mild oozing is normal and usually does not require gauze. The bleeding should stop by the evening, but you can expect to see blood-tinged saliva for up to 24-48 hours following surgery. ***If bleeding is heavy, or continues after 2 hours, moisten a black tea bag, place on surgical site, and apply pressure or bite firmly for 30 minutes.*** This usually stops the bleeding. Please note, a little blood mixed with saliva will look like a lot of blood. If bleeding remains uncontrolled, please call the office.

How do I manage the pain after surgery?

Unfortunately, oral surgery is accompanied by some degree of discomfort. You may have a prescription for pain medication. **Start pain medication within 2-3 hours of getting home before the numbness has worn off.** It is important to have food on your stomach before taking pain medication to reduce nausea. The effects of pain medications vary widely among individuals. ***If you do not achieve adequate relief at first, you may alternate your pain medicine with ibuprofen (i.e., Advil, Motrin). (For example: if your pain medication is due every 6 hours you may take a dose of ibuprofen at the 3-hour mark). You should avoid using Tylenol while taking the prescription pain medication as both contain acetaminophen.*** Once you are no longer taking the prescribed pain medicine you may alternate ibuprofen and Tylenol for pain. Please remember that the most severe pain is usually within 6 hours after the local anesthetic wears off; after that your need for medicine should lessen. Warm compresses/heating pads can also help.

****PLEASE NOTE: phone calls for narcotic pain prescription refills are ONLY accepted during office hours****

How do I manage nausea after surgery?

Nausea is not uncommon after surgery. Sometimes pain medications are the cause. It may be helpful to start with ½ of a pain pill and increase to a full pill if needed. Nausea can be reduced by preceding each pain pill with a small amount of food and taking the pill with a large amount of water. If you are given a prescription for nausea, you may take one 30 minutes prior to taking your pain medication.

How do I manage swelling after surgery?

Some swelling is expected with oral surgery. It can be minimized by using an ice pack or bag of frozen vegetables wrapped in a towel and applied to the cheek. Apply for 20 minutes on/20 minutes off for the first 24 hours after surgery. ***After the first 24 hours, switch from ice to heat.*** Warm compresses (heating pad, warm wash cloth) can be applied 20 minutes on/20 minutes off. **Please remember, you may have more swelling day 3-4 after surgery. This is normal.** Swelling usually “peaks” on day 3-4 after surgery.

What should I eat after surgery? Can I use a straw?

Your diet should be limited to soft foods for the first day (examples: Jello, yogurt, soft pasta, mashed potatoes, scrambled eggs, pancakes, ice cream, soup (room temperature), milkshake [**NO STRAW**], etc.). Avoid hot food, liquids, and spicy and acidic foods immediately after surgery. A normal diet can be resumed in the following days as tolerated, however **avoid any hard, crunchy, sticky foods (examples: chips, nuts, seeds, granola, caramel, etc) until healed (typically 2 weeks).** Most foods can be eaten if care is taken to avoid the surgical sites (chew on opposite side when possible). **NO STRAWS FOR 10-14 DAYS. This can dislodge the blood clot and lead to prolonged oozing and possible dry socket.**

Do I have stitches? Do they need to be removed?

You may or may not have stitches. If you do, they are usually dissolvable and will fall out on their own. It is not unusual for one or more to loosen and fall out before dissolving. If the stitches come out and the wound opens and creates a hole, it is typically not of concern unless there is excessive bleeding. Fortunately, incisions in the mouth do heal very quickly, and any wound that does open will close naturally. Some patients may have a “liquid stitch” in place. It may look grey in color when it is mixed with blood. This is normal. The liquid stitch is designed to come off on its own.

Irrigation Syringe Directions (after wisdom teeth removal only):

If you receive an irrigation syringe in your post op bag, please DO NOT use it for the first 5 days. After the 5th day, you will begin to use it only on your **LOWER** sockets daily after each meal until you are certain the tooth socket is closed completely and that there is no chance of any food particles lodging in the socket. Failure to irrigate often results in delayed healing, infection, and/or dry socket, which can be quite painful.

Mix 1 part water to 1-part prescribed mouth rinse together and draw up into the syringe. You may also use warm salt water or tap water instead of mouth rinse & water. Gently place the curved tip of the syringe into the opening of the lower sockets and flush until free from food debris. You do not need to flush upper sockets as they typically do not trap food. **Please remember if the irrigation is not directed to the bottom of the socket, it may not be getting all the food out.** Placing the tip of the syringe gently into the socket opening will help to ensure you are getting everything out. It is not uncommon for a slight amount of bleeding to occur when first irrigating, but it should subside.

Do I have any activity restrictions?

Do not drive or operate machinery for 24 hours after surgery and while on post op pain medication. Vigorous exercise may be resumed when you are no longer taking prescription pain medication and as your condition allows. **NO CONTACT SPORTS FOR 14 DAYS.** Please contact our office if a written excuse is needed for organized sports or gym class.

When can I smoke/vape?

Smoking and vaping can significantly delay healing and cause an increase in post-operative pain and possible dry socket. Therefore, you should refrain from smoking as long as possible.

What if I feel something sharp in my extraction site?

If you feel hard or sharp edges in the surgical areas, it is likely you are feeling the bony walls which once supported the extracted teeth. Occasionally, small slivers of bone may work themselves out of the gum tissue and, while normal, can cause some discomfort. Warm compress and ibuprofen may help. It may take several days for the spicule to work its way out, however If it does not resolve on its own or causes concern, please call the office.