

# Post-operative instructions following tooth extraction

The initial healing period typically takes from one to two weeks, gum tissue takes about three to four weeks to heal and complete healing of the bone can take about six months depending on your care of this area. Some discomfort, bleeding and swelling should be expected in the next 24 hours as your mouth heals. As your mouth heals, you can promote faster healing and avoid complications by simply following these instructions.

## Do not disturb the wound

In doing so you may invite irritation, infection and/or bleeding. The healing process begins immediately after surgery as your body sends blood to nourish the tooth socket. Simple pressure from a piece of gauze is usually all that is needed to control the bleeding and to help a blood clot to form in the socket. Sutures may need to be removed in 3-5 days. Be sure to consult with your dentist if bleeding persists.

## Do not use tobacco products for 48-72 hours after tooth extractions

Smoke can interfere with the healing process, promote bleeding, and can cause a very painful situation known as "dry socket." Continuing to smoke during these first few days will slow healing and soft tissue will not be able to begin to fill in the socket to form the blood clot needed for healthy healing. Smoking can also interfere with the bone that surrounds the socket resulting in slowing its process of filling in the socket.

## Brushing

For several days after the extraction, it is important to keep the area as clean as possible to prevent infection and promote healing. Do not directly brush the extraction site for the first three to four days after oral surgery to prevent dislodging of the blood clot from the socket. Instead this area can be gently and carefully wiped with a clean, wet gauze pad or cloth. After this time you may carefully brush your teeth around this area and floss gently.

## Mouthwash

Avoid all rinsing for 24 hours after extraction. This is to insure the formation of a blood clot. Disturbance of this clot can lead to increased bleeding or the loss of the blood clot. After the first 24 hours you should rinse this area using warm salt water (1/4tsp. salt in 8oz of warm water) or mild antiseptic rinses like Betadine. Rinse very gently after every meal and snack, making sure that the water reaches the extraction site. Rinsing removes food particles and debris from the socket to help promote healing.

## Do not spit/suck through a straw

This will promote bleeding and may dislodge the blood clot.

## Bleeding

When you leave the office, you will be given verbal instructions regarding the control of post-operative bleeding. A rolled up gauze pad/cotton will be placed on the extraction site and you will be asked to change this dressing every 20 minutes or so depending on the amount of bleeding that is occurring. It is normal for some blood to ooze from the area of surgery for 8-12 hours. Should you need to use the gauze at home, remember to roll it into a ball large enough to cover the wound. Hold firmly in place, by biting or with finger pressure, for about 30-60 minutes. This pressure helps reduce bleeding and permits a clot to form in the tooth socket. If bleeding still continues, moisten a tea bag with water and fold it in half and bite down on it for 30 minutes. Tea contains tannic acid, a styptic, which may help to reduce the bleeding.

## Medications

Some discomfort is normal after surgery. Analgesic (pain killer) tablets can be taken directed by a dentist. Prescription medications, which may have been given to you, should also be taken for two to three days after surgery or as directed. If antibiotics are prescribed, you should carefully follow the instructions and finish the antibiotics until they are completely gone.

## Swelling

To prevent swelling, apply an ice pack or a cold towel to the outside of your face in the area of the extraction during the first 12 to 24 hours. Apply alternately, 10-20 minutes on then 10-20 minutes off, for an hour or longer if necessary.

## Diet

For the first 24-48 hours, you should maintain a diet of soft foods, such as Jell-O, pudding, yogurt, mashed potatoes, soups, etc. Food that crumbles such as potato chips, popcorn, crackers, cookies, etc. should be avoided. Hot spicy foods should also be avoided to prevent irritation and burns of the extraction site. Also avoid carbonated beverages for three to four days. Eating immediately following the procedure is not recommended. When the numbness has worn off you may eat, yet be sure to chew on the opposite side for the first 24 hours in order to keep food away from the extraction site. Also, keep anything sharp from entering the wound (e.g., eating utensils, fingers and other objects, etc.). It is also important to drink plenty of fluids in between meals and with meals. Return to normal diet as tolerated.

## Activity

For the first 24 hours, your activity should be limited because increased activity can lead to increased bleeding. No bending over or heavy lifting for two to three days. Do not play any wind instruments or blow up balloons for a period of 10-14 days.

## Anaesthesia warning

When a local anaesthetic is used your lip, tongue and cheek will be numb for several hours after the procedure. While it is numb, it will feel "funny." During this period you must be

careful not to bite, chew, pinch and/or scratch this area, which can lead to serious soft tissue trauma.

### Long term problems

Having a missing tooth can lead to several problems such as shifting teeth, difficulty chewing and [malocclusion](#), which could lead to [TMJ](#) problems. This area will need to be restored with a fixed [dental bridge](#), [dental implant](#), a removable partial or a [denture](#) to insure good long-term dental health.

