Oral Surgery Specialists
Diplomates of the American Board of Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery

Office Phone:
410-268-7790

After-Hours Emergency Contact:
410-268-7790

After Wisdom Tooth Removal

Post-Operative Instructions

The removal of impacted teeth is a serious surgical procedure. Post-operative care is very important. Unnecessary pain and the complications of infection and swelling can be minimized if the instructions are followed carefully.

Immediately Following Surgery

- Keep the gauze pad placed over the surgical area in place for 30 minutes. After this time, remove and discard the gauze.
- Avoid vigorous mouth rinsing or touching the wound area after surgery. This may cause bleeding by dislodging the blood clot.
- Take prescribed pain medication as soon as you begin to feel discomfort, usually as the local anesthetic begins to wear off.
- Restrict activities the day of surgery and resume normal activity when you feel comfortable.
- Apply ice packs to the sides of the face where surgery was performed. See the swelling section below for details.

Bleeding

A certain amount of bleeding is expected following surgery. Slight bleeding, oozing, or redness in the saliva is common. If excessive bleeding occurs, gently rinse or wipe old clots from your mouth, place a gauze pad over the area, and bite firmly for 30 minutes. Repeat if necessary. If bleeding continues, bite on a moistened tea bag for 30 minutes. The tannic acid in the tea bag can help form a clot by contracting bleeding vessels. To minimize further bleeding, remain calm, sit upright, and avoid exercise. If bleeding does not subside, call the office for further instructions.

Swelling

Swelling is a normal reaction after surgery and is usually proportional to the procedure performed. Swelling around the mouth, cheeks, eyes, and sides of the face is not uncommon. It may not become noticeable until the day after surgery and usually reaches its maximum at 2 to 3 days after surgery. To minimize swelling, apply ice packs to the sides of the face continuously while awake for the first 36 hours. After 36 hours, ice is no longer beneficial. If swelling or jaw stiffness persists for several days, this is generally normal. After 36 hours, moist heat applied to the sides of the face can help reduce swelling.

Pain

For moderate pain, take one or two tablets of Tylenol or Extra Strength Tylenol every 3 to 4 hours, or ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil), two to four 200 mg tablets every 3 to 4 hours, if appropriate for you. For severe pain, take the prescribed medication exactly as directed. Prescribed pain medicine may make you groggy and slow your reflexes. Do not drive, operate machinery, or drink alcohol while taking it. Pain should gradually improve each day. If pain persists or worsens, call the office.

Diet

After general anesthesia or IV sedation, begin with liquids. Do not use straws. Drink from a glass, as the sucking motion can dislodge the blood clot and cause more bleeding. Eat soft foods and chew away from the surgical sites. High-calorie, high-protein intake is important. Drink fluids regularly to prevent dehydration. Aim for at least 5 to 6 glasses of liquid daily. Do not skip meals if possible, as proper nutrition helps you feel better and heal faster. If you feel dizzy when sitting up or standing, pause and sit upright for a minute before standing fully.

Important: Call **410-268-7790** if bleeding does not subside, if pain worsens, or if you have concerns after surgery.

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Post-Operative Instructions — Continued

Keep the Mouth Clean

Do not rinse your mouth on the day of surgery. You may brush your teeth the night of surgery, but rinse gently. Beginning the day after surgery, rinse at least 2 to 3 times daily, especially after eating, with a cup of warm water mixed with one teaspoon of salt.

Discoloration

In some cases, discoloration of the skin follows swelling. Black, blue, green, or yellow discoloration may occur as blood spreads beneath the tissues. This is a normal post-operative occurrence and may appear 2 to 3 days after surgery. Moist heat applied to the area may help the discoloration resolve more quickly.

Antibiotics

If you have been prescribed antibiotics, take them exactly as directed. They are given to help prevent infection. Stop taking the antibiotic and call the office if you develop a rash or any other unfavorable reaction.

Nausea and Vomiting

If nausea and/or vomiting occur after surgery, do not take anything by mouth for at least one hour, including prescribed medications. Then begin sipping a clear beverage such as cola, tea, or ginger ale slowly over 15 minutes. When the nausea subsides, you may resume solid foods and prescribed medications as tolerated.

Other Complications

- If numbness of the lip, chin, or tongue occurs, there is usually no cause for alarm. This is often temporary. Be careful not to bite a numb lip or tongue. Call us if you have questions.
- A slight elevation of temperature immediately following surgery is not uncommon. If the temperature persists, notify the office. Tylenol or ibuprofen may be taken to reduce a fever if appropriate for you.
- Be careful when rising from a lying or seated position. Because you may not have eaten or had much to drink before surgery, and because pain medication can make you dizzy, you may become lightheaded if you stand up quickly. Sit upright for one minute before standing.
- Occasionally, patients may feel hard projections in the mouth with the tongue. These are usually not roots, but the bony walls that supported the tooth. They often smooth out on their own. If not, our doctors can remove them.
- If the corners of your mouth are stretched, they may dry out and crack. Keep your lips moist with an ointment such as petroleum jelly.
- Sore throat and pain with swallowing are not uncommon. The muscles can become swollen, making swallowing uncomfortable. This usually improves within 2 to 3 days.

Helpful Tip: Warm salt-water rinses starting the day after surgery can help keep the area clean and promote comfort.

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Post-Operative Instructions — Continued

Other Complications (Continued)

- Stiffness (trismus) of the jaw muscles may cause difficulty opening your mouth for a few days following surgery. This is a normal post-operative event and usually resolves with time.

Finally

- Sutures may be placed in the area of surgery to minimize post-operative bleeding and help healing. If a suture becomes dislodged, there is no cause for alarm. Simply remove it from your mouth and discard it. Sutures are typically removed approximately one week after surgery. Removal usually requires no anesthesia and causes little or no discomfort.
- Pain and swelling should gradually decrease each day after surgery. If your post-operative pain or swelling worsens, or if unusual symptoms occur, call the office for instructions.
- There will be a cavity where the tooth was removed. Over the next month, the cavity will gradually fill in with new tissue. In the meantime, keep the area clean, especially after meals, with salt-water rinses or gentle brushing.
- Your case is individual and no two mouths are alike. Do not rely solely on well-intended advice from friends. Discuss your questions with the people best able to help you: our doctors or your family dentist.
- Brushing your teeth is okay — just be gentle at the surgical sites.
- A dry socket occurs when the blood clot is dislodged prematurely from the tooth socket. Symptoms may include pain at the surgical site and pain radiating toward the ear 2 to 3 days after surgery. Call the office if this occurs.
- If you are involved in regular exercise, be aware that your normal nourishment intake may be reduced. Exercise may weaken you. If you become lightheaded, stop exercising.

Call Our Office Promptly If You Experience:

- Bleeding that does not improve with pressure
- Pain that worsens instead of improving
- Persistent fever
- Rash or reaction to medication
- Dry socket symptoms or any unusual concerns

If you have **any** questions or concerns during recovery, please call **410-268-7790**. We are here to help.