

# **Post-Operative Instructions – Oral Surgery**

The following is a general guide which can be used to help you navigate the post operative period for most oral surgery procedures. If there are other specific instructions which pertain to your procedure, the surgical team will direct you.

**Bleeding and oozing:** Bleeding and/or oozing for about 12 hours after surgery is normal. You should expect heavier bleeding in the initial hours following your procedure which should begin to taper off in the hours following. Bite down firmly on the gauze packs that have been placed over the surgical area(s). Make sure that the gauze remains in place, undisturbed for 30 minutes, then reapply with clean gauze. The gauze should be folded or rolled up such that pressure is being applied when biting down (as opposed to the gauze simply absorbing any blood). Do not eat, drink, or sleep with gauze in your mouth. Remove the gauze prior to eating or drinking, and replace when done.

If you experience continued heavy bleeding while biting on the gauze, it is possible the gauze is in the wrong position and not pressing on the extraction site. Repeat the following steps: 1. Remove gauze, 2. Reposition gauze so that it is sitting directly on top of the extraction socket to the best of your ability, 3. Bite on the gauze for 30 minutes to 1 hour. Additionally, squeezing a saturated tea bag onto the gauze and using it as described above can help slow bleeding as there are natural astringents in the tea.

Once bleeding has stopped, or has decreased to the point where only a small stain is present on the gauze limited to the site of the extraction, the gauze can be discontinued.

**Pain:** Unfortunately, most oral surgery procedures are accompanied by some degree of discomfort. There are many good strategies to get you through this period more comfortably. Some form of pain reliever should be taken before the numbness goes away. Over-the-counter medications like ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin), acetaminophen (Tylenol), or aspirin are adequate if there are no allergies, they have been tolerated in the past, and they do not interfere with any other medications. For more involved procedures, some combination of pain medication will likely be prescribed. The specific instructions for use of those medications will be reviewed with you at your appointment, and will be listed on the bottle. It is important to be aware that post operative pain can sometimes increase over the first few days before it begins to subside.

**Antibiotics:** Antibiotics are sometimes prescribed to treat or prevent infections. Please take all of the antibiotics as directed. If you experience any adverse reaction, such as nausea, stomach upset, rash, or itching, discontinue the medication. A rash or itching may indicate an allergic reaction to a medication. Antihistamines (Benadryl) will usually counteract hives, rash, and itching. Swelling of the lips or tongue or difficulty breathing may represent a more severe allergic reaction, and you should seek medical attention at the nearest emergency room immediately.

**Swelling:** Swelling after oral surgery is normal and generally reaches its maximum within 3 days. Keeping the head elevated with 2 pillows when lying down can minimize facial swelling.

Swelling can also be minimized by applying cold compresses to your face every hour (20 minutes on, 20 minutes off) for the first 48 hours. If new swelling appears after the original post-surgical swelling goes away, please contact the office.

**Rinsing and Spitting:** Avoid rinsing and spitting for 48 hours after surgery. It may disturb the clot forming at your surgical site. Beginning on the third day, you may begin gently rinsing with warm (not hot) salt water to help irrigate the area. Dilute 1 teaspoon of salt in 8 ounces of warm water and rinse gently 3 or 4 times a day for 1 week. Do not use commercial mouthwashes such as Listerine and Scope for one week. It is normal to feel a hole after the tooth is removed, the socket will be closing from the bottom and after 3 or 4 weeks will close, and food will no longer get stuck.

**Stitches:** Stitches are **dissolvable** and start to disintegrate after a few days to a few weeks. Avoid touching them with your tongue or fingers.

**Brushing:** **Avoid** brushing near the surgical sites the day of surgery as there will likely be some soreness and swelling. Begin your normal hygiene routine the following day taking care to avoid any harsh brushing or trauma to the surgical sites.

**Nausea:** Nausea is a common side effect of surgery or anesthesia. Narcotics are the most frequent cause of nausea and should be discontinued. If vomiting persists after 24 hours, please contact our office.

**Smoking and Alcohol:** Avoid smoking or chewing tobacco for at least 3 days after surgery. Alcohol should not be consumed for the first 24 hours. Also avoid alcohol while taking pain medication and/or antibiotics.

**Diet:** A nutritionally balanced diet is very important. During the first 24 hours, consume cold to lukewarm temperature drinks and foods such as soups, ice cream, yogurt, applesauce, pudding, soft cereal, pasta, mashed potatoes, scrambled eggs, pancakes, pureed foods, shakes or smoothies. You may gradually progress to solid foods over the next few days. Do not skip meals. By eating nutritious meals regularly, you will feel better, gain strength, have less discomfort, and heal faster. **Do not use a straw for 3 days** as this may disturb the blood clot and/or promote bleeding. **Avoid** any foods that contain nuts, seeds, popcorn, rice, corn, and avoid spicy, or more acidic foods.

**Limit activities as much as possible for the first day.** Showering is ok the day after surgery. **Avoid** steps and stairs alone as you may lose your balance throughout the day, especially if you were sedated. **Do not** engage in any vigorous activity such as, exercising, running, lifting weights, swimming, etc. for approx. 5-7 days.

**If you have followed our instructions and are having a severe problem, contact the surgeon's office at 216-464-1200. For after-hours emergencies, please call the office and follow the prompts. You will be instructed to leave a voice message and your phone number so that the doctor can be paged.**