

POSTOPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS
Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery of Ann Arbor
Norbert E. Fernandez, DDS
203 S. Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48103
oralsurgeryofannarbor.com
(734) 994-1040



INTRODUCTION

Extraction of teeth and other oral surgical operations are very important. Proper postoperative care is necessary. Careful attention to the following instructions will help prevent complications, minimize discomfort, and promote proper healing.

KEEP THE MOUTH CLEAN

Beginning 24 hours after surgery, rinse gently, using a solution of ½ teaspoon of salt in a glass of warm water, 4 times a day. Tooth brushing can resume 24 hours after surgery. Avoid the areas of surgery, and use a soft toothbrush. As healing progresses, normal brushing techniques may be resumed.

BLEEDING

Gauze pressure is the most effective way to control bleeding. When you leave the office you will most likely be biting on gauze. The gauze should be left in place for at least 60 minutes before removing it. After 60 minutes, the gauze can be removed and the surgical site inspected. If bleeding continues, replace the gauze with a fresh piece. Be sure to place the moistened gauze properly over the site of bleeding. Leave the gauze in place, under steady pressure, undisturbed for one hour. Resting, with the head elevated on a couple of pillows is also helpful. Do not be alarmed if bleeding does not subside. It is not uncommon to require the use of gauze throughout the day. No smoking, spitting, sucking on straws, or vigorous rinsing for 24 hours. This may cause persistent bleeding or dislodge the blood clot.

PAIN

The local anesthetic wears off in one to three hours. Some form of pain reliever should be taken before the numbness goes away. For simple extractions, Tylenol, aspirin or ibuprofen is usually adequate. For more involved surgery, such as the removal of impacted teeth, the doctor will prescribe pain medication. Take this medication as prescribed. You must eat something (soup, yogurt, soft foods, etc.) before taking this medication so it does not upset your stomach. Some of the medications can make you groggy and may slow reflexes. Do not drive or operate machinery while on this medication. Do not consume any alcoholic beverages while taking pain medications.

Most discomfort from oral surgery will be gone in a few days. If pain continues beyond the fourth postoperative day, it may require attention and you should call the office.

SUTURES

In most cases dissolvable sutures are used. These sutures will come out on their own in two days to two weeks. It is normal for pieces of stitch to break off.

SWELLING

Swelling is common with oral surgery. It usually takes 48-72 hours for swelling to peak. The use of ice packs to the side of the jaw where the surgery was performed may help to minimize swelling. The ice pack should be used regularly, 30 minutes on and 30 minutes off for up to 48 hours. If surgery was done on both sides of the jaw, it is acceptable to alternate the ice pack from side to side, giving each side 30 minutes. After 48 hours, heat can be applied to the swollen area to speed the reduction of the swelling.

Heating pads, hot water bottles, and warm washcloths are all acceptable heat sources. If swelling continues to increase in size after 4 days, it may require attention and you should call the office.

MEDICATION

The medications we recommend and/or prescribe are meant to minimize swelling and discomfort, treat or prevent infection, and promote healing. If you have been prescribed an antibiotic, take all of the medication as directed. If you experience any adverse reactions to medications such as nausea, rash, or itching, discontinue the medications and contact the office immediately. Make sure to eat prior to taking medication. This will help avoid nausea and/or vomiting.

DISCOLORATION

You may develop black, blue, green, or yellow discoloration resembling a bruise to the tissue. This is due to a slight oozing of blood beneath the tissue and is of little significance. This is a normal postoperative occurrence and will resolve in a few days to a week.

DIET

You may eat anything soft that you wish. A high calorie, high protein diet is important for rapid healing. Soft nutritious foods such as eggs, chopped meats, custards, Jell-O, pudding, thick soups, milk, milk shakes, pancakes, oatmeal, potatoes, pasta, or a liquid dietary supplement are examples of acceptable foods. Avoid crunchy, sharp foods like chips, popcorn, and peanuts. Also avoid foods with a shell, seeds or husks such as strawberries and rice. Do not drink through a straw for 7 days after the procedure.

IMPACTED OR BURIED TEETH

After the removal of impacted teeth, it is possible to encounter any one of the following:

- **Jaw stiffness:** This will resolve in one to two weeks with healing and increased use of the jaw.
- **Numbness:** Of the lower lip, tongue, chin, and gum tissue. This is almost always a temporary condition. It may last for a few days or many months. Contact the office if this condition persists for more than 3 days.
- **Irritation:** Sores or cracking of the lips and corners of the mouth. This is due to chapped lips or stretching of the lips during surgery. It is best treated by keeping the lips well lubricated with a mild ointment.
- **Sharp bony edges:** Occasionally patients will detect hard substances with their tongue in the area of the extraction. This is the bony wall that surrounded the tooth. In most cases this is a temporary condition; contact the office if it persists.
- **Dry socket:** This term refers to a condition that may arise after the removal of teeth. Symptoms include a throbbing, radiating pain. This pain may travel to the ear, jaw, teeth, head, or throat. It usually will not appear until the fourth postoperative day. This condition will resolve without treatment. However, the pain can be managed through the use of pain relievers and/or with medicated dressings placed in the extraction socket. If you think you have this condition, please call the office so we can help you.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS

If you are in doubt about anything, please contact the office during normal business hours. If an emergency exists, call the office and the answering service will direct your call to the doctor.