

POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS FOR WISDOM TEETH REMOVAL

The following will cover important information regarding proper post-surgical care for wisdom teeth extraction. If you have been scheduled to have your wisdom teeth removed, it will be important to follow these instructions exactly as we present them.

Discomfort is normal after the extraction of teeth. If you are not allergic or intolerant to nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, start taking ibuprofen (also known as Advil® or Motrin®) as instructed by your doctor at the time of your surgery. If you are asthmatic, do not take ibuprofen unless you have tolerated it in the past. If the ibuprofen alone doesn't control your pain, also take your prescribed narcotic following the regimen provided at your surgical visit. Ibuprofen and your prescribed narcotic can be taken together. Be certain to take your pain medicines with food; this will help prevent nausea. Remember, narcotic pain medicine will impair your judgment and reflexes.

Gauze pad(s) should be placed directly over the extraction site(s) and held in place with firm biting pressure; proper placement will help you not swallow blood, which can make you nauseated. Replace the gauze pad(s) every 20-40 minutes. When the gauze pads have little or no blood on them, they are no longer necessary. The amount of bleeding will vary from person to person. Most of your bleeding will slow within 3-4 hours, but a small amount of bleeding is common for up to 24 hours.

Do not rinse on the day of surgery; it may prolong your bleeding. Begin saltwater rinses the day after surgery and continue for 1 week. Rinse with warm salt water 3-4 times each day. To make the saltwater solution, dissolve 1 teaspoon of salt in a small glass of warm tap water.

If you have been given an irrigating syringe, start irrigation 1 week following surgery. Fill the syringe with warm salt water and place the tip of the syringe into the extraction site to clean. Do this 2-3 times a day until the surgical site is closed. This usually can take 2-3 weeks or longer.

Swelling is normal after surgery and is a major cause of post-extraction discomfort. Swelling typically peaks by the third day and then starts to resolve; it can be reduced by the use of an ice pack. Apply the ice pack to the side of your face for 10 minutes; transfer it to the opposite side for another 10 minutes. Continue icing the face for the first 24 hours. Do not freeze the skin. Ice packs are useful for swelling during the first 24 hours only. Also, keep your head elevated on 2 pillows for 3-4 days. These measures will not eliminate swelling, but they will help to reduce its severity.

Please make sure to eat prior to taking post-op medications. Start with clear liquids, such as apple juice, tea, or broth. Gradually advance your diet as tolerated. Always cool down any hot foods or liquids during the first 24 hours. You should eat only soft foods for the first few days: for example, soups, eggs, mashed potatoes, and meatloaf are fine. To help prevent dry socket, do not use a straw for the first 3 days after surgery. Also, avoid carbonated beverages, drinks and mouth rinses with alcohol, and smoking.

Begin brushing your teeth the day after surgery. It is important to brush all of your teeth, even if the teeth and gums are sensitive. Bacterial plaque and food accumulation near the extraction site will delay healing. A child's toothbrush with soft bristles is helpful in the areas near your extraction sites.

Do not smoke for at least a week. Smoking will increase your bleeding; the nicotine and tar in tobacco impair healing and may cause a dry socket.

Unless told otherwise, do no vigorous physical activity for 3-5 days following your surgery. Physical activity increases your blood pressure, which will cause an increase in your swelling, pain, and bleeding. You may gradually increase your activity, such as jogging or tennis, 5-7 days after your surgery.