

# AFTER EXTRACTION

## (GETTING A TOOTH PULLED)

Extractions, or removal of a tooth or teeth, is a serious surgical procedure. Post-operative care is very important. Unnecessary pain and complications can be minimized if these instructions are followed very carefully.

### Immediately After Surgery...

**DO NOT SMOKE FOR THREE (3) DAYS. SMOKING CAN CAUSE A COMPLICATION CALLED DRY SOCKET AND WILL MAKE THE EXTRACTION SITE HEAL MORE SLOWLY, INCREASE THE LIKELIHOOD OF DRY MOUTH OR INFECTION, AND PROLONG THE PAIN.**

**DO NOT SPIT AND DO NOT USE A STRAW FOR THREE (3) DAYS – SPITTING OR USING A STRAW CAN LEAD TO DRY SOCKET.**

The gauze packing placed over the surgical area should be kept firmly in place for 30-45 minutes after surgery. After 30-45 minutes, you should remove the gauze briefly in order to take your first dose of pain medication, even if you are still numb. You can also eat something cool and soft such as; apple sauce, pudding, or yogurt.

If you are still bleeding, place new, moist gauze directly over the extraction site. Change the gauze every 45 minutes. Be sure to wet the gauze with clean water and then squeeze it out before putting it in your mouth.

Vigorous mouth rinsing or touching the wound area following surgery should be avoided. This may result in the blood clot being dislodged.

Restrict your physical activities the day of surgery and the day following surgery. You may resume normal activity on the next day, if and when you feel comfortable.

Place ice packs to the sides of your face where surgery was performed. Refer to the section on swelling for further explanation.

### Bleeding...

A certain amount of bleeding following surgery is normal. Slight bleeding, oozing, or redness in the saliva is also normal. Persistent bleeding may be controlled by gentle rinsing or wiping any old clots from your mouth, then placing a moist folded gauze pad over the area and biting firmly on the gauze for 45 minutes. Remember, it is the pressure over the surgical site, not the absorbency of the gauze that will help a blood clot to form and start to slow and eventually stop the bleeding. Change the gauze packs every 45 minutes, five or six times over the next 4-6 hours, if you are still bleeding. If bleeding continues, keep using the gauze and make sure that the wet gauze packs are positioned directly over the extraction sites (the part of your gums where your tooth was pulled from). Ensure that you are biting firmly on the gauze.

Elevating the head with 2-3 pillows or sitting up in a recliner will also help stop the bleeding by decreasing the flow of blood to the head (and consequently, the mouth). If bleeding persists, biting on a moistened

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tea bag (black tea) over the extraction site in thirty to forty-five minute intervals may also help control the bleeding. The tannic acid in the tea leaves helps to form a clot.

You should not have to go to bed in the evening with gauze in your mouth.

To minimize further bleeding, try not to become too excited or to partake in strenuous physical activities, try not to talk too much, avoid using straws, and avoid vigorous mouth rinsing. If bleeding does not stop, call the office for further instructions.

### **Pain...**

For moderate pain, over the counter ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil), can be effective in controlling pain. 600mg (3 over the counter tablets of 200mg each) is equivalent to prescription strength Motrin. This dosage can be taken by most people every 6 hours.

Studies have shown that when ibuprofen isn't enough, 325-600mg of acetaminophen (Tylenol) works well in conjunction with ibuprofen. It is important to remember that whenever taking any pain medication, it is best to take them with some food to help avoid an upset stomach.

Most people report almost no discomfort after 3 days. The area in your mouth may still be sore, especially when something touches it, but if you notice that your pain is increasing instead of decreasing after 3 days, you may have an infection and should come in during Urgent Care hours to be evaluated or call the office right away.

Please review the "Pain Management" handout for more details. If you would like, your doctor can also give you a prescription for these medications.

### **Swelling...**

The swelling that is normally expected is usually proportional to the surgery involved. Swelling around the mouth, cheeks, eyes and sides of the face is expected. This is the body's normal reaction to surgery and eventual repair. The swelling will not become apparent until the day following surgery and will not reach its maximum until 2-3 days after; however, the swelling may be minimized if you use ice packs immediately after the surgery, even if you aren't swollen yet. Two baggies filled with ice or ice packs should be applied to the sides of the face where surgery was performed for the first 24 hours. Put the ice on for 10 minutes and then take it off for 10 minutes. Do not keep the ice on your face continuously for longer than 10 minutes at a time. If you have an increase in swelling after 3 days please give us a call for instructions.

### **Bruising and Discoloration...**

In some cases, discoloration of the skin follows swelling. The development of black, blue, green, or yellow discoloration is due to blood spreading beneath the tissues. This is a normal occurrence after some surgery, and may occur 2-3 days after your surgery. Moist heat applied to the area may speed up the healing of the discoloration.

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### Diet and Exercise...

Drink from a glass, and do not use a straw. The sucking action through the straw can cause more bleeding by dislodging the blood clot. You may eat anything soft by chewing away from the surgical site(s). High-calorie/high-protein foods will be very important since you might not be able to eat as much as you normally would. Food/drink should be consumed regularly, but avoid eating anything hot, spicy, sour, crunchy, or chewy for at least 3 days.

You should prevent dehydration by drinking fluids regularly. Your food intake will be limited for the first few days. You should compensate for this by increasing your fluid intake. At least 5-6 glasses of liquid should be consumed daily. Try not to miss a single meal. If you continue to eat, you will feel better, have more strength, less discomfort, and heal faster.

Avoid exercise for at least one day. If you are involved in regular exercise, be aware that your normal nourishment intake will likely be reduced. Exercise may further weaken you. If you get light headed, stop exercising.

Please review the “Foods After Extraction” handout for more information.

### Keep the Mouth Clean...

It is important to keep your mouth clean to help prevent an infection. Brush and floss the rest of your teeth 2 times a day but be very gentle around the area of the extraction. Remember not to spit! To rinse, put some water in your mouth, close your mouth, and then gently tilt your head from side to side so the water moves back and forth from one side of your mouth to the other. When you’re done, lean over a sink and open your mouth, letting the water just fall out, and wipe your mouth. This may be messy, but again, **DO NOT** spit.

Do not use mouthwash. Starting the day after surgery, you can use warm salt water rinses 3-6 times a day (it’s a good idea to do this after meals) to gently clean your mouth. **DO NOT** swish, **DO NOT** spit. Move your head side to side just as described above and then lean over a sink to let the water fall out of your open mouth. Use 1 cup of warm water and one teaspoon of salt to make a salt water rinse.

### Sutures...

Sutures, or “stitches”, are sometimes placed in the area of surgery to minimize postoperative bleeding and to help healing. There are two commonly used types of stitches – 1) stitches that dissolve on their own or 2) stitches that need to be removed by a doctor (made of silk). Dissolvable sutures will dissolve over time or become dislodged sometime in the next 2-14 days. When this happens there is no cause for alarm; just remove the loose portion of suture from your mouth and discard it. For silk stitches, you will need to return to the office in 7-14 days to have them removed.

Even if you have stitches, there will still be a hole where the tooth was removed. The hole will gradually heal and close over the next 4-6 weeks, as it fills in with new tissue. In the meantime, the area should be kept clean, especially after meals, with salt-water rinses or a toothbrush. If you are having trouble keeping

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the hole clean or you continue to get food stuck in it, please let us know and we can give you a special plastic syringe that you can use to rinse out the debris more easily.

### **Antibiotics...**

Antibiotics are not usually needed after oral surgery. However, you may be prescribed antibiotics if your doctor thinks you are at a higher risk for infection. If you have been prescribed antibiotics, take the medicine exactly as directed, with food, until finished. Discontinue antibiotic use in the event of a rash, difficulty breathing, or other signs of an allergic reaction- but be sure to call the office to notify the doctor. Call the office if you have any questions.

Please review the “Antibiotics” handout for further instruction.

### **Dry Socket...**

A dry socket is a condition that occurs when the blood clot that forms over the extraction site dissolves or becomes dislodged before it's done healing. When this happens, the result can be increased symptoms of pain/throbbing/aching at the extraction site that radiates up into the ear. Dry socket is rare and usually doesn't occur before the 4th or 5th day following the surgery. Dry socket is not dangerous but can be very painful and requires attention. A dry socket means that healing will take longer.

If you experience increased symptoms like these, call the office.

### **Infection...**

Infection following teeth extraction is rare, but it can happen. Typically, if an infection were to occur it would be in the first 3-5 days following surgery. Signs and symptoms include increased swelling after three days, failure to reduce swelling after four days, new/increased pain, or drainage/pus at the extraction site. Infection is typically managed by antibiotics, but sometimes can require drainage by a doctor. If you experience any of these signs or symptoms, please call the office for instructions.

An infection can become serious and spread quickly if nothing is done about it. If you experience severe swelling in your neck, difficulty breathing, difficulty swallowing, a fever, or if you feel very sick, these may be signs that you need medical attention urgently. If you experience these symptoms, you should go to the emergency room or call 911.

### **Other Conditions, Concerns, or Complications...**

If numbness of the lip, chin, or tongue occurs there is no cause for alarm. As stated before surgery, this is usually temporary in nature. You should keep in mind that if your lip or tongue is numb, you could bite it accidentally and not feel the sensation, so be very careful when talking, eating, or drinking. If the numbness continues after 3 days please call the office for instructions.

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You should be careful going from a lying down position to standing. Taking pain medications can cause you to become light headed or even to faint if you stand up too quickly. Before standing up, you should sit upright for one minute before attempting to stand up.

Occasionally, patients may feel hard projections or bumps, around the extraction site, with their tongue. These are not parts of the tooth that were left behind, nor are they stitches. These projections will usually smooth out on their own. If they don't, please call the office so you can be scheduled to come in and address them.

If the corners of your mouth are stretched, they may dry out, become chapped, and crack. Your lips should be kept moist with lip balm or an ointment such as Vaseline.

Sore throats and pain when swallowing are not uncommon. The muscles get swollen and stretched out during surgery. The normal act of swallowing can then become painful. This sensation will usually go away in 2-3 days.

Stiffness of the jaw muscles may make it difficult to open your mouth for a few days following surgery. This is normal and should resolve over the next 7-10 days. To help speed up recovery, try to stretch your jaw muscles regularly by opening wide and closing several times.

***Please call our office if you have any concerns. You can speak to a doctor by reaching our front desk during regular business hours or our emergency answering service on evenings and weekends by calling our main office number (215) 525-3046.***