

Post-Operative Instructions: General

BLEEDING – Excessive or continued bleeding may be controlled by first rinsing or wiping any old clots from your mouth, and then placing a new moist gauze pad over the area with firm biting pressure for an additional hour and repeating as necessary. If bleeding continues, you may bite on a moistened tea bag in the same manner. Tannic acid in tea helps blood to clot. If bleeding does not subside, please call our office for further instructions.

SUTURES – Sutures may be placed to minimize postoperative bleeding and to help healing. Unlike dissolvable sutures, permanent sutures will usually be removed approximately 1 week after surgery. The removal of sutures typically requires no anesthesia or needles. It only takes about a minute with minimal discomfort associated with this procedure. If one or two sutures become dislodged early, there is no cause for alarm. Remove the loose suture from your mouth and discard it.

SWELLING – Most swelling will not become apparent until the day following surgery and will not reach its maximum until 48–72 hours postoperatively. However, swelling and discomfort may be minimized by the immediate use of ice packs. Ice packs should be applied to the outside of the face over the area where surgery was performed for the first 48–72 hours. Ice packs should be placed on for 20 minutes, then removed for 20 minutes. After 48–72 hours, ice has no beneficial effect. Instead, the application of heat may be helpful in reducing the size of swelling more quickly. On occasion, some residual swelling may last a week or longer.

PAIN – Take the prescribed pain medication before you begin to feel discomfort. This usually coincides with the start of the local anesthetic wearing off. Taking pain medication on an empty stomach may cause nausea, so it is recommended to take the pills with food or drink. Some pain medications (narcotics) may make you groggy and slow down your reflexes. Do not drive an automobile or work around machinery while medicated. It is also best to avoid alcoholic beverages. Over-the-counter medications such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil®/Motrin®) may be used when appropriate. Discomfort following surgery may increase on the second or third day following the procedure, and then should improve each day thereafter. If pain persists or worsens after 4 days, please notify our office as it may require attention.

BRUISING – In some cases, bruising of the skin may follow swelling. This is a normal postoperative occurrence that may occur 2–3 days after the procedure and take 1–2 weeks to gradually fade away.

DIET – It is best to wait until after the local anesthetic has completely worn off before beginning to eat. You may eat anything soft and cool the first day by chewing away from the surgical site. Do not use straws, as this may encourage more bleeding by dislodging the blood clot. Do not drink hot fluids or eat hot food on the first day. Avoid hard, crunchy foods that may disturb the area. It's best to progress to more solid foods and return to your normal diet as soon as possible.

ORAL HYGIENE – Begin gentle, warm salt water rinses (1/2 teaspoon of salt in a glass of warm water) the morning after your surgery. Rinsing 4–5 times a day for several days, especially after meals, will help gently flush away food particles. Continue to brush your teeth as best as you can, remembering to stay away from the surgical site(s) for several days. Be sure to keep the surgical area(s) clean to promote better healing.

ANTIBIOTICS – Antibiotics may be prescribed for certain patients after a surgical procedure to help prevent or cure an infection. If you have been placed on an antibiotic, take the medication as directed until gone. Discontinue antibiotic use in the event of a rash or any other unfavorable reaction and notify our office immediately.

NAUSEA AND VOMITING – In the event of nausea and/or vomiting following surgery, do not take anything by mouth for at least 30 minutes, including prescribed medicines. Sitting in a darkened environment, limiting movement, and applying a cold compress to your forehead may be helpful. Taking an over-the-counter diphenhydramine (Benadryl®) may stave off mild nausea. Start again with bland fluids (water, ginger ale, 7UP®, Sprite®), sipping them slowly over a 15-minute period. When nausea subsides, begin eating solid foods and taking the prescribed medications again. If nausea persists or you have trouble keeping anything down, notify the office, as an anti-nausea medication and/or a change in pain medication may be necessary.

ACTIVITIES – It is best to avoid strenuous activity for a day or two following your extraction, as this may cause the extraction site to start bleeding again. After a few days, you should feel fine to resume your normal routine.

NO TOBACCO – The use of tobacco products slows down the healing process and may lead to developing other complications. We strongly recommend avoiding tobacco products for at least 7 days following surgery.