

POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS: WISDOM TEETH REMOVAL

Please read this 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.

PAIN

Discomfort is normal after the extraction of teeth. We usually provide a prescription narcotic to help with the pain and also recommend the use of ibuprofen (also known as Motrin® or Advil®) along with the narcotic. Be certain to take your pain medicines with food; this will help prevent nausea. Remember, narcotic pain medicine will impair your judgment and reflexes. Do not wait until you have pain to take the medication. Stay ahead of the pain so you do not have to play catch up.

BLEEDING

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 a few days.

Do not rinse on the day of surgery; it may prolong your bleeding. Begin saltwater rinses the day after surgery and continue for one week. Rinse with warm salt water 6–8 times each day. To make the saltwater solution, dissolve a ½ teaspoon of salt in a small glass of warm tap water.

If you have been given an irrigating syringe, start irrigation on the fourth day following surgery. Fill the syringe with warm salt water and place the tip of the syringe into the extraction site to clean. Do this 3–4 times a day for 2 weeks and lessen as the surgical site heals.

SWELLING

Swelling is normal after surgery and is a major cause of post-extraction discomfort. Swelling typically peaks by the third or fourth 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 the first 24–48 hours only. Also, keep your head elevated on 2 pillows for 3–4 days. These measures will not eliminate swelling, but they help to reduce its severity.

DIET

When you get home from surgery, start drinking clear liquids such as apple juice, tea, or broth. Gradually ramp up your diet as tolerated. Always cool down any hot foods or liquids during the first 24 hours. If you were sedated for surgery, do not eat fatty, creamy, or oily foods; these foods may cause nausea. Soft foods are best for the first 2 days; for example, soups, eggs, mashed potatoes, and meatloaf are fine.

ORAL HYGIENE

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.

Do not smoke for at least a week. Smoking can cause dry sockets, delayed healing, and risks of infection. It is also recommended to avoid soda for 3 days to help prevent dry sockets.

ACTIVITY

Unless told otherwise, do no vigorous physical activity for 3 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.