

Post-Operative Instructions: Wisdom Teeth Removal

TO ENSURE OPTIMAL COMFORT AND RECOVERY AFTER YOUR SURGERY, PLEASE FOLLOW THESE SIMPLE POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS.

- Discomfort is normal after the extraction of wisdom teeth. If you are not allergic or intolerant to non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), start taking ibuprofen (also known as Advil® or Motrin®) as instructed by your doctor at the time of your surgery. If your pain is not controlled by the ibuprofen alone, take your prescribed narcotic also. Ibuprofen and your prescribed narcotic can be taken together.
- Be certain to take your pain medications with food. This will help prevent nausea.
- Remember, narcotic pain medicine will impair your judgment and reflexes.
- Gauze pads should be placed directly over the extraction sites and held in place with firm biting pressure. Proper placement will help you not swallow blood, which can make you nauseated. Replace the gauze pads 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 one week. Rinse with warm salt water 3–4 times each day. To make the saltwater solution, dissolve ½ teaspoon of salt in a small glass of warm tap water.
- If you have been given an irrigating syringe, start irrigation one 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 3–4 times a day for 2 weeks and lessen as the surgical site heals.
- 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 15 minutes. Transfer it to the opposite side for another 15 minutes. Continue icing the face for the first 24 hours. Do not freeze the skin. Ice packs are useful for the first 24 hours only. Also, keep your head elevated on 2 pillows for 2–3 days. These measures will not eliminate swelling, but they help to reduce its severity.
- To help with medication tolerance, we recommend that you eat right away after your surgery. Start with clear liquids such as 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. You should eat only soft foods for the first 2–3 days. For example, soups, eggs, mashed potatoes, and meatloaf are fine.
- To help prevent dry socket, do not use a straw for the first week after surgery.
- 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 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 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.

If you have any additional questions, please call our office. Our staff wants to help you in any way we can to make your post-operative recovery successful. Thank you.