

Post-Operative Instructions Following Tooth Extraction

If you have any difficulties or concerns following your surgery, please do not hesitate to call us or return to our office for a follow-up exam.

Immediately following surgery:

- Keep the gauze pad placed over the surgical area with pressure applied by biting down until the bleeding stops.
- Take your prescribed pain medication as soon as you begin to feel discomfort. This will usually coincide with the local anesthetic becoming less effective.
- Do not suck on a straw, spit, or smoke.
- Restrict your activities the day of surgery, and resume normal activity when you feel comfortable.
- Place ice packs on the side of your face where surgery was performed. Refer to the section on swelling for an explanation.
- For mild discomfort, use Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin). DO NOT take more than 800mg every 4-6 hours.
- Vigorous mouth rinsing or touching the affected area following surgery should be avoided. This may initiate bleeding caused by dislodging the blood clot that has formed. Do not rinse your mouth for the first post-operative day or while there is bleeding. After the first day, use a warm salt water rinse every 4 hours and after meals to flush out particles of food and debris that may lodge in the area.
- Restrict your diet to liquids and soft foods which are comfortable for you to eat.
- Bleeding- A certain amount of bleeding is to be expected following a surgical procedure. Slight bleeding, oozing, or redness in the saliva is not uncommon. Bleeding is best controlled by the use of pressure. Excessive bleeding may be controlled by placing a gauze pad over the area and biting firmly for thirty minutes. Repeat if necessary. If bleeding has not decreased in 3-4 hours, bite on a dampened tea bag placed directly over the surgical site. The tannic acid in the tea helps the blood to clot.
- Swelling- The amount of swelling that is normally expected after an extraction depends on the type of surgery. Swelling around the mouth, cheek, eyes, and side of the face is not uncommon. The swelling sometimes may not appear immediately, and it may occur up to 2-3 days post-surgery. You can help to minimize the swelling by applying ice packs to the affected area. For the first 3 hours, apply the ice packs directly to the area, alternating on for 20 minutes then off for 20 minutes. Applying ice after 24 hours has no beneficial effect. If swelling or jaw stiffness has persisted for several days, there is no cause for alarm. If the swelling is significant, you may use a moist heat compresses to help suppress it.