



Post-Operative Instructions

If you have had teeth extracted or other oral surgery performed recently (in the last week or two), please note the following information:

Swelling

Most swelling resolves in about 1 week. Discoloration (black & blueness) may take a bit longer to go away. Heat applied to the side of the lower face beginning 3–4 days following surgery, in the form of a hot, moist towel or a heating pad set on low to medium, will help speed the return to normal. Swelling should be decreasing by the third or fourth day after surgery and essentially be gone in less than 2 weeks after surgery.

Activity

You should be able to return to fairly normal type activities 3 or 4 days after surgery. Return to physical activity gradually, making certain to get enough rest and plenty of fluids. Some things that require the use of the mouth and jaws, like using a SCUBA diving regulator or playing a musical wind instrument, may not be possible for up to 2 weeks.

Mouth Opening

It is common for the jaws to be stiff and hard to open wide after oral surgery. This is due to muscle pain and soreness. The best way to assure a speedy recovery is to gradually begin stretching the lower jaw open. Chewing gum and tougher foods will help rehabilitate the sore muscles. Your thumbs or fingers can be used on the front upper and lower teeth to help stretch the jaws open. External heat and massage on the outside of the lower jaw, as well as medication like Advil® and Aleve®, can help the discomfort. You should be able to open your mouth normally within 2 weeks after surgery. If not, notify us and return for a check!

Diet

After 3 or 4 days, you can safely eat most foods, although it often takes a week or more until you are comfortable with a normal diet. Gradual progression from softer to harder and tougher to chew foods over several days is best. Some foods, such as corn chips, pretzels, peanuts and the like, are best avoided for a couple of weeks after surgery. Significant pain with eating is usually a good indicator that you may be advancing too quickly to return to a normal diet.

Oral Hygiene

You may begin brushing your other teeth or using mouthwash a day or 2 after surgery. About 5–7 days after surgery, it is advisable to begin gentle brushing of the gum tissue around the area where teeth have been extracted. (Electric toothbrushes are okay to use.) Some discomfort and minor bleeding are common for the first few days. If you have been given a plastic irrigation syringe, use this after meals and at night to rinse out lower extraction sockets with tap water (½ teaspoon of salt in ½ glass warm water or half-strength mouthwash). Fill the syringe with liquid and holding it above the site, squirt into the extraction hole, gently flushing it out. Repeat once or twice. Within 2–3 weeks, the extraction sockets or holes will be healed, and you can discard the syringe.

A Waterpik® and similar electric hygiene devices may be used instead of the manual syringe but not starting until at least 2 weeks after surgery.

Other Dental Care and Procedures

Due to soreness and swelling and the presence of healing wounds, we advise waiting for a least 2 weeks after surgery before undertaking any routine dental work (cleaning, filling, orthodontic adjustments, etc.).

Pain

Resolving discomfort is not abnormal for up to 2 weeks following tooth removal or other oral surgery procedures, especially in more difficult cases. The pain should be continuing to improve each day. Unless you cannot use them, over-the-counter medications like Advil® and Aleve® or Tylenol® products can help a lot once you stop taking any prescription medication given for more severe pain. If you do not have pain, there is no reason to take pain medication!

Prolonged Numbness

Prolonged numbness of the lip or chin is usually due to swelling or bruising of the dental nerve. It often takes up to 6 weeks for feeling to return to normal. Unfortunately, not much can be done to speed this process. Please let us know if sensation does not return to normal after your surgery.

Post-Op Visits

If you are experiencing problems or have questions, we can usually arrange a post-operative visit on short notice. Please note that there are no additional charges for post-operative care visits.

If you have questions, concerns, or problems, please contact our office for advice or to arrange for a visit to check your status! (520) 745-2454