Vandervoort
FAMILY DENTISTRY

Post-Operative Instructions for Dental Extractions

The initial healing period after a dental extraction is 1-2 weeks, and you will likely experience some swelling and pain during this period. If you notice any signs of infection (fever, redness, pus, large swellings which start 2-3 days after surgery), contact our office. Before the procedure, you were given a local anesthetic to ensure your comfort. This anesthetic typically leaves your lips, teeth, and tongue feeling numb. For this reason, **avoid chewing until the numbness has completely worn off**. Please do not disturb the wound. Avoid spitting or touching the wound on the day of surgery.

Pain: Some pain and discomfort after an extraction is expected. You should begin taking pain medication before you feel the local anesthetic wearing off. For mild to moderate pain, 1 or 2 Extra Strength Tylenol (500mg) tablets may be taken every 4 hours. Ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) is an anti-inflammatory and may be taken as well. Ibuprofen bought over the counter comes in 200mg tablets and may be taken in the following doses: two 200mg tablets may be taken every 4 hours, three 200mg tablets may be taken every 6 hours, or four 200mg tablets may be taken every 8 hours. **Research indicates that one of the most effective post-operative pain control regimens is rotating 500-1000 mg Tylenol and 400-800 mg Ibuprofen every 4 hours.** For severe pain, prescribed pain medication should be taken as directed. Do not take any of the above medications if you are allergic or have been instructed by your doctor not to take them. Many post-operative pain medications such as Norco, Lortab, and Percocet contain narcotics. These medications can make you dizzy, sleepy, and impair coordination and judgment. If you are taking narcotic pain medication, you should remain at home. Do not operate complex equipment (such as a lawn mower), drive a car, or make important decisions while taking narcotic pain medication. Nausea is also common if medications are taken on a completely empty stomach, so try to take medications with a snack or meal. If any other side effects occur, be sure to reread the instructions and warnings on the medication, and call our office if questions arise.

Antibiotics: Antibiotics are NOT necessary for all extraction procedures. **If an antibiotic has been prescribed, be sure to follow the instructions to take the full course of antibiotic, even if your symptoms have eased or disappeared.**

Bleeding: Remember to **keep firm pressure on the extraction site with gauze as instructed, replacing with fresh, damp gauze every 10-15 minutes for at least an hour, or until bleeding has stopped**. Some bleeding or redness in the saliva is normal during the first day or two after surgery. Excessive bleeding (your mouth fills up rapidly with blood) can be controlled by biting on a moistened gauze pad placed directly on the bleeding wound for 30-60 minutes. **If bleeding continues, create firm, direct pressure by biting on a moistened tea bag placed over the surgical site for 30-60 minutes.** Tea contains tannic acid, which is an astringent. Direct pressure and the tannic acid will constrict blood vessels and help to stop bleeding. If active bleeding persists, please call our office for further instructions.

Dry Socket: Once a blood clot has been established, we want you to protect it for several days by avoiding behaviors that risk dislodging the clot. This includes behaviors such as drinking through a straw, smoking, rinsing vigorously, and spitting. If the clot is removed from deep in the extraction site, a "dry socket" with infection and pain are much more likely. **Smoking should be avoided or reduced as much as possible, as it is the leading cause of "dry sockets."**

Swelling: Swelling and bruising is a normal occurrence after surgery. Immediate application of ice to the face near the area of surgery will help to minimize swelling and bruising. Use an ice pack or sealed plastic bag filled

with ice wrapped in a thin towel as much as possible during the first 12-24 hours after surgery while awake. **Rotate placing the ice on the surgical area for 15 minutes on and 15 minutes off.** Ice is helpful only during the first 72 hours after surgery.

Diet: Because nourishment is important to the healing process, eat once the numbness has worn off. Drink plenty of fluids. Avoid hot liquids and hot food on the day of surgery. Liquids and soft food should be consumed on the day of surgery. **We recommend a soft diet or limiting chewing to an unaffected area of the mouth, or both, depending upon the number and locations of extractions performed.** This will help to avoid further damage to the soft tissues in the mouth while the area is healing. Do not, however, avoid eating. **A good diet is extremely important to your healing. Return to a normal diet as soon as possible unless otherwise directed.**

Oral Hygiene: Make sure you do not neglect to keep your other teeth clean. Brush and rinse very gently and avoid spitting forcefully. Keeping your mouth clean by brushing and flossing is important. Start brushing your teeth on the evening of surgery or the first day after surgery. **Be very gentle with brushing and flossing near the surgical site(s). You can gently clean the surgical site with a damp Q-tip. Rinsing with warm saltwater solution (1/2 teaspoon of salt dissolved in one cup of warm water) 2-3 times per day will help cleanse the surgical site and promote the healing process.**

Activity: It is generally best to avoid exercise or strenuous exertion until pain and swelling resolves. If you experience throbbing or aching at the surgical site while exercising, you should discontinue exercising, wait a day or two, then try again. Keep in mind that you are probably not taking normal nourishment; this may weaken you and further limit your ability to exercise. Short naps in bed during the day are acceptable. Lying in bed for a prolonged period during the day is not healthy, it will only slow recovery and enhance fatigue. You will feel stronger and better faster if you get your body moving.

When to Return: Often, sutures are placed at the time of extraction. **Unless you are told otherwise, the sutures will dissolve on their own after about 7-10 days.** Occasionally, a follow-up appointment will be scheduled 2-3 weeks after surgery to evaluate healing. It is our desire that your recovery be as smooth and pleasant as possible. If you have questions about your progress, please call our office.