



Homecare Instructions Following your Tooth Extraction(s)

Anesthetic: The length of time you experience numbness varies, depending on the type and amount of anesthetic you've received and the area that was anesthetized. While your mouth is numb, you want to be careful not to bite your lip, cheek or tongue. For this reason, it is important that you do not eat any food that requires chewing while your mouth is numb. If you have liquid foods, it is very important that you do not drink through a straw. The sucking action that occurs when a straw is used may loosen the blood clot and prevent proper healing. The numbness should subside within a couple of hours. If it doesn't, please contact your dentist.

Bleeding: Your dentist may place a gauze pack on the extraction site to limit bleeding and confine the blood while clotting takes place. This gauze pack should be left in place for 30-45 minutes after you leave the dentist office. Do not chew on the pack. There may be some bleeding or oozing after the pack is removed. If so, follow this procedure:

- Fold a piece of clean gauze into a pad thick enough to bite on. Dampen the pad with clean warm water and place it directly on the extraction site.
- Apply moderate pressure by closing your teeth firmly over the pad. Maintain this pressure for about 30 minutes. If the pad becomes soaked with blood, replace it with a clean one as necessary.
- Do not suck on the extraction site or disturb it with your tongue.
A slight amount of blood may leak from the extraction site until a clot forms. However, if heavy bleeding continues, call your dentist. (Remember a little bit of blood mixed with a lot of saliva can look like a lot of bleeding.)

The blood clot: After the extraction, a blood clot forms in the tooth socket. This clot is an important part of the normal healing process. You should avoid activities that might disturb the clot. Here is how to protect it:

- Do not smoke, or rinse your mouth vigorously, or drink through a straw for 24 hours. These activities create suction in your mouth, which could dislodge the clot and delay your healing.
- Avoid alcoholic beverages and mouthwash containing alcohol for 24 hours.
- Limit strenuous activities for 24 hours after the extraction. This will reduce bleeding and help the blood clot to form.
- Keep your head elevated above your heart for the next 24-48 hours to help with bleeding.
- Sometimes the blood clot does not form in the first day or two after the extraction, or it forms and breaks down for some reason. The result is called osteitis or dry socket. This can be very painful and should be reported to your dentist. A dressing may be placed in the socket to protect it until the socket heals and to reduce any pain.

Medication: If your dentist has prescribed any medication to control pain and prevent infection, use it only as directed. If the pain medication prescribed does not seem to be working for you, do not increase the number of doses you take or decrease the interval between doses. Call your dentist if you are having any difficulties with the medication.

Swelling and pain: After a tooth is removed, you may have some discomfort and notice some swelling. You can reduce swelling and pain by applying a cold compress to your face as directed by your dentist. An ice bag or cold, moist cloth can be used periodically. Your dentist may give you specific instructions of how long and how often to use a cold compress. Your dentist will also give you a cold pack to use on your way home from the office. If you have prolonged or severe pain, swelling, bleeding, fever, nausea or vomiting, call your dentist immediately. If you cannot reach your dentist, go to the hospital emergency room. Post-operative discomfort spikes at 48 hours. Don't be surprised if you have more pain 2 days after your procedure.

Diet: After the extraction, drink lots of fluids and eat soft nutritious foods. Avoid hot liquids and alcoholic beverages. Do not use a straw for 24 hours. Begin eating solid foods the next day or as soon as you can chew comfortably. For the first few days, try to chew food on the opposite side of the extraction site. When it feels comfortable, you may resume chewing on both sides.

Cleaning your mouth: Do not clean your teeth next to the healing socket for the rest of the day. You should, however, brush and floss your teeth everywhere else thoroughly. Gently rinse your mouth afterward. Begin cleaning the teeth next to the socket the next day. The tongue should also be brushed. This will help eliminate the bad breath and unpleasant taste that is common after extractions.

The day after gently rinse your mouth with warm salt water. (1/2 teaspoon of salt to 8 ounces of water) after every meal to help keep food particles out of extraction site. But remember not to rinse your mouth vigorously, as this may dislodge the clot. If you have hypertension, discuss with your dentist whether you should rinse with salt water. Avoid using a mouth rinse or mouthwash during early healing stages unless your dentist tells you to.

When choosing oral hygiene products, look for those that carry the American Dental Association Seal of Acceptance. A sign the product has met ADA criteria for safety and effectiveness.

Follow up: If you have sutures that require removal, your dentist will instruct you on when to return to the office.

Please call the office with any questions at (303)595-4994.
*If urgent assistance is needed after hours, call (720)280-9158.