

Tooth Extraction: Postoperative Instructions

First the short story - *for the next 24 hours:*

- ❖ Do not rinse.
- ❖ Do not spit.
- ❖ Delay brushing your teeth.
- ❖ If you use any tobacco products, avoid them completely.

Pain medicine:

- ❖ If you've been given a prescription pain medicine, take it before your numbness wears off

Regarding bleeding:

- ❖ Leave your gauze in initially for 45 minutes

- ❖ Change the gauze, repeating every 30 minutes, only if it's bleeding too much. This would appear dark red, thick and ropey.
- ❖ Expect slight bleeding that turns your saliva red for a while. If it's thin and runny, it's a little blood in a lot of saliva – and you don't have to use the extra gauze.
- ❖ Dispose of your gauze properly to protect others.
- ❖ See more details in the "Bleeding" section below.

Tooth extraction is a minor surgical procedure. Therefore, it is natural that temporary changes will occur in the mouth afterward. You'll be functioning normally in just a few days. In the meantime, you should follow a few simple rules to help promote healing, prevent complications, and make yourself more comfortable.

Your Numbness

The length of time you experience numbness varies depending on the type of anesthetic you've received. While your mouth is numb, you'll want to be careful not to bite your cheek, lip or tongue. The numbness should subside within a few hours.

The Gauze

Dr. Moorhead has placed a gauze pack on the extraction site to limit bleeding and confine to blood while clotting takes place. This gauze pack should be

left in place for about 45 minutes after you leave our office. **Do not chew on the pack.**

Bleeding

There may be some bleeding or oozing after the gauze pack is removed. If so, follow this procedure:

- ❖ Fold a piece of the sterile gauze sent home into a pad thick enough to bite on. Dampen the pad and place it directly on the extraction site.
- ❖ Apply moderate pressure by closing the teeth firmly over the pad. Maintain this

pressure for about 30 minutes. If the pad becomes soaked, replace it with a clean one as necessary.

- ❖ Do not suck on the extraction site.
- ❖ Bleeding: A slight amount of blood may leak at the extraction site until a clot forms. However, if heavy bleeding continues (thick, ropey, dark red in appearance) after repeating the gauze packs several times, call Dr. Moorhead. Remember that a lot of saliva and a little blood can look like a lot of bleeding. This will appear as thin, and bright red.

The Blood Clot

After an 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. If the clot doesn't form properly, the nerve endings of the bone can be left exposed, resulting in the classic "dry socket." Here's how to protect the clot:

- ❖ Do not smoke, or rinse your mouth vigorously. These activities create suction in the mouth, which could dislodge the clot and delay your healing. In the worst case, they could cause a painful dry socket.
- ❖ Delay brushing your teeth for the rest of the day.
- ❖ Limit strenuous activity for 24 hours after the extraction. This will reduce bleeding and help the blood clot to form.

Swelling and Pain

After a tooth is removed, you may have some discomfort and notice some swelling. You can help reduce swelling and pain by applying cold compresses to the face. An ice bag or cold, moist cloth can be used. Hold the compress on the face near the extraction site for 20 minutes with constant pressure then remove to help keep swelling to a minimum. In addition, sleeping on an extra pillow tonight will also reduce swelling that normally occurs after you've been lying down all night.

Medication

Dr. Moorhead may have prescribed medication to control pain. Use it only as directed. Remember that pain medications work best if they are taken by the clock, instead of waiting for the medication to wear off before taking more. By taking the pain medication by the clock, you'll keep more comfortable, and actually wind up taking less than if the medicine has to play "catch-up" if the discomfort is allowed to start again. *If you have prolonged or severe pain, prolonged swelling or bleeding, or a fever, call Dr. Moorhead immediately.*

Diet

After the extraction, drink lots of liquids and eat soft, nutritious foods. Avoid alcoholic beverages and hot liquids. Begin eating solid foods the next day or as soon as you can chew comfortably. For about two days, try to chew food on the other side opposite the extraction site. If you are troubled by nausea and vomiting, call Dr. Moorhead for advice.

Rinsing

The day after the extraction, gently rinse your mouth with warm salt water (half a teaspoon of salt in an 8 oz. glass of warm water). Rinsing after meals is important to keep food particles out of the extraction site, but remember not to rinse your mouth vigorously. Avoid using a mouthrinse or mouthwash during this early healing period.

Oral Hygiene

Continue to floss your teeth and brush thoroughly at least twice a day using a fluoride toothpaste. Keeping the area clean will actually speed up your healing. Your tongue should also be brushed. This will help eliminate the bad breath and taste that is common after an extraction. Always use a soft-bristled brush so that you do not injure the tissues in your mouth. On the day of the extraction, avoid cleaning the teeth next to the healing tooth socket.

Remember that you have just had minor surgery. Be kind to yourself!



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