

Home Care Following Oral Surgery

Please read these instructions carefully. Sometimes the after-effects of oral surgery are quite minimal, so not all of these instructions may apply. Common sense will often dictate what you should do. However, when in doubt, follow these guidelines or call our office for clarification.

Instructions for Day of Surgery

EXERCISE CARE: Bite down firmly on the gauze packs that have been placed over the surgical areas, making sure they remain in place. Do not remove the gauze for one hour. Additional gauze packs may be placed as necessary if bleeding is significant. Intermittent bleeding or “oozing” is normal for the first twenty-four hours and gauze may not be needed for minor bleeding. A moistened tea bag may be substituted for a gauze pack.

Do not disturb the surgical area today. Do **NOT** rinse vigorously or probe the area with any objects or your fingers.

BRUSHING: You may gently brush your teeth. Begin your normal oral hygiene as soon as possible after surgery, gentle brushing and rinses are important for healing.

DO NOT SMOKE! It is very detrimental to healing; it will increase your post-operative discomfort and may cause a “dry socket”.

SWELLING: Swelling is often associated with oral surgery. It can be minimized by using a cold pack or ice bag wrapped in a towel and applied to the face adjacent to the surgical area. This should be applied 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off for the first 48 hours after surgery. If you have been prescribed a medicine for the control of swelling, be sure to take it as directed.

PAIN: You will usually have a prescription for pain controlling medication, and if you take it before the anesthetic has worn off, you will be able to better manage any discomfort. The effects of medications vary widely from person to person but always take them according to instruction.

NAUSEA: Nausea is not uncommon after surgery. Sometimes pain medications are the cause. Nausea can be reduced by preceding the medications with food, or taking the medicine with a large amount of water. Try to keep taking clear fluids and minimize dosing of pain medications. Decarbonated cola may also help. Call us if your symptoms persist.

DIET: Eat any nourishing soft food that can be taken with comfort. Avoid extremely hot foods, especially while numb. Avoid foods like nuts, popcorn etc., that may get lodged in the socket areas. If you are diabetic, maintain your normal eating habits and follow instructions regarding your diabetes controlling medications.

Instructions for the 2nd & 3rd Days After Surgery

MOUTH RINSES: Keeping your mouth clean after surgery is essential. Use 1/4 teaspoon of salt in an 8 ounce glass of warm water and gently rinse with portions of the solution, taking at least 5 minutes to use the entire glass. Repeat as often as you like, but at least three times daily. If you were given a prescription mouth rinse, you may use it in addition to the salt water rinses.

DRY SOCKET: If a dry socket (loss of blood clot) occurs there is a noticeable, distinct persistent throbbing pain in the jaw, often radiating toward the ear and forward along the jaw causing the other teeth to ache. Dry sockets usually occur 3 to 5 days after surgery. If you do not see steady improvement during the first few days after surgery, call the office and report your symptoms.

HEAT APPLICATION: After the first two days apply warm compresses to the skin overlying areas of swelling for 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off to help soothe those tender areas. This will help decrease swelling and stiffness.

It is our desire that your recovery be as smooth and pleasant as possible. Following these instructions will assist you, but if you have questions about your progress, please call the office where you had your surgery. Please try to call during office hours, however a 24-hour answering service is available for after hours contact with a doctor. Calling during office hours will afford a faster response.