

Post-Operative Instructions

1. **Bleeding:** Minimal bleeding or oozing from the surgical site is normal for the first 24 hours after surgery. After your procedure, you will be biting onto a gauze that has been placed over the surgical area by your surgeon. Maintain constant pressure by biting onto the gauze firmly for at least 60 minutes. If bleeding continues after removal of the gauze, replace it with a fresh, slightly moistened pad and continue firm biting pressure for another 60 minutes. Do NOT remove the gauze to check for bleeding until the end of the 60-minute period, because repetitive removal and replacement of the gauze can inhibit the clotting process and stimulate further bleeding. You can change the gauze every 60 minutes as needed until the bleeding stops. If bleeding continues or you run out of gauze, a moistened teabag may be substituted for the gauze. Common mistakes that should be avoided when attempting to stop bleeding include chewing on the gauze rather than placing constant firm pressure and placing gauze between teeth rather than directly onto the surgical site. Do NOT use gauze after the first day. Do NOT eat or sleep with gauze in your mouth. Some blood in the saliva on the second and third day after surgery is normal and usually does not require biting down on additional gauze. If severe bleeding continues, contact our office immediately for further instructions.

2. **Pain Control:** Most oral surgery procedures are accompanied by some degree of post-operative discomfort which reaches a peak during the 3rd -5th day after your procedure. Medications have been prescribed or recommended by your surgeon. Please follow the directions of these medications carefully. Pain medications are most effective at minimizing pain if they are taken before your local anesthetic (numbing agent) wears off. The degree of pain experienced, and the effectiveness of pain medications vary among individuals. Do NOT take any pain medications on an empty stomach.

3. **Antibiotics:** Antibiotics are not always necessary after surgery. Antibiotics are typically prescribed for two reasons: (1) to treat an active infection and (2) to prevent an infection. If antibiotics have been prescribed to treat or prevent an infection, take the medication as directed and make sure to finish all the tablets provided. It is extremely important to finish the entire course of antibiotics (even if you are feeling better) because stopping early can result in recurrence of a pre-existing infection and increased severity of a new infection. Stopping early also contributes to antibiotic resistance, which can lead to more severe and difficult to fight infections. If you develop a rash, hives, itching, diarrhea, or difficulty breathing when taking antibiotics, stop all medications and contact our office immediately for further instructions.

4. **Swelling:** Most oral surgery procedures are accompanied by some degree of post-operative swelling. Swelling normally increases for 2-3 days after surgery and then gradually decreases over time. It is important to remember that swelling will peak on the 3rd -5th day after your procedure. The degree of swelling experienced varies among individuals and can be dependent on the procedure performed. Swelling can be minimized by applying ice to your face/cheeks adjacent to the surgical area for the first 48 hours after your procedure. Ice is most effective

when applied in 20-minute intervals (20 minutes on, 20 minutes off). This can be done using store bought ice packs, ice cubes placed in a zip-lock bag, or with unopened bags of frozen peas/corn. After 48 hours, it is best to switch from ice application to a warm/moist compress 3 times per day (morning, mid-day, night). This can be done using a warm/moist towel or heating pad.

5. Diet: Good nutrition and adequate fluid intake are important after surgery. On the day of surgery, it is advisable to stick to a non-chew diet, especially if you are planning on eating prior to the local anesthetic (numbing medicine) wearing off. Non-chew options include, but are not limited to smoothies, protein shakes, soup, milkshakes, ice cream, applesauce, pudding, and yogurt. Over the next several days, you can slowly progress to solid foods at your own pace. We recommend maintaining a soft diet for up to 5 days after your surgery. Soft diet options include but are not limited to scrambled eggs, mashed potatoes, grits, overcooked noodles/pasta, fish, ground meat, tofu, and cottage cheese. It is important to remain hydrated after your surgery by drinking plenty of fluids (ex. water, tea, juice, Gatorade). Avoid foods that are hot (temperature), spicy, acidic (ex. orange juice, lemon juice), hard/crunchy (ex. chips, cereal), small/grainy (ex. rice, quinoa) until the incisions in your mouth have healed. Avoid alcoholic beverages for 24 hours after surgery as alcohol can have adverse interactions with certain medications and can increase bleeding risk. Do NOT use a straw for 7 days after surgery.

6. Oral Hygiene: Keeping your mouth clean after your surgery is important for preventing infections and promoting healing. After your surgery you may brush and floss your teeth like normal, taking care to avoid brushing directly over the surgical area. If your surgeon prescribed an antimicrobial mouth rinse (ex. Peridex/Chlorohexidine), gently rinse your mouth with the mouth-rinse as prescribed. Do not use prescription mouth-rinse for longer than recommended as it can stain your teeth and cause temporary changes to your taste buds. If you were not prescribed a mouth-rinse, gently rinse your mouth with warm salt water (1/2 teaspoon ionized salt + 1 cup water) starting 48 hours after surgery. Saltwater rinses should be done at least 5 times per day (AM, PM, after meals) for 1-2 weeks after surgery. Do NOT gargle, swish, or spit aggressively for 7 days after your surgery. Avoid mouth rinses with high alcohol content (ex. Listerine) for 7 days after your surgery. Avoid using a WaterPik for 7 days after your procedure. Avoid chlorinated pool or ocean water in your mouth for 7 days after your surgery.

7. Jaw muscle stiffness: Stiffness of the jaw muscles accompanied with painful or limited opening of the mouth (trismus) commonly occurs after long dental procedures. While trismus can arise after any oral surgery, it most commonly occurs after the extraction of the lower wisdom teeth. Jaw stiffness can be due to normal post-operative swelling or the hyperextension of the jaw during the procedure. It typically resolves within a week after your procedure without intervention. Symptoms can be improved with gentle massaging of the jaw muscles and temple, warm compress, and rest (by avoiding difficult to chew food).

8. Bruising: Bruising on your face and neck may occur after oral surgery. Discoloration can range from yellow to blue/purple and may remain for up to 2 weeks after surgery.

9. Fever: A low-grade fever may occur 24-48 hours after surgery. This can be controlled by drinking cool liquids and taking Tylenol as directed. If you have a fever of 101° or higher, contact our office immediately for further instructions.

10. Nausea/Vomiting: Nausea is a common side effect of general anesthesia and can sometimes occur as a side effect of narcotic pain medications. Nausea can sometimes be avoided by avoiding taking pain medications on an empty stomach. If nausea occurs, home remedies such as clear carbonated beverages (ex. 7-up, Sprite, Ginger Ale) and over the counter anti-emetic medications (ex. Dramamine, Pepto-Bismal) may help. If symptoms do not improve or repeated vomiting occurs, contact our office for further instructions.

11. Sore Arm: A small amount of bruising and discomfort may occur around the IV site for patients who underwent general anesthesia for their oral surgery procedure. A warm moist washcloth placed over the area for 15 minutes 3-4 times per day will help resolve the irritation.

12. Activity limitations: Avoid strenuous activity for 7-10 days after your procedure. Strenuous activities include, but are not limited to, lifting weights, high intensity cardio, contact sports, Yoga/Pilates, swimming, and surfing. If strenuous activity is required for your job, an excuse letter can be provided for you.

13. Women of childbearing age: Antibiotics may interfere with the absorption of oral contraceptive medications, deeming them ineffective and increasing the risk of unplanned pregnancy. Please be advised to use additional methods of birth control while taking antibiotics and for 1 weeks following completion of antibiotics.

*Immediate Dentures (only if instructed): If your procedure involved extraction of teeth with delivery of an immediate denture or stay-plate (flipper), do NOT remove them for 24 hours after your procedure. Early removal will result in tissue swelling and inability to replace them. After the first 24 hours, dentures can be removed to clean your mouth 3-4 times per day. Dentures should be left in as much as possible for the first week after extractions and denture delivery (unless otherwise instructed by your surgeon). Please remember that stay-plates/flippers are for cosmetic purposes only and should NOT be used for biting into or chewing food.



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