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ORAL SURGERY & IMPLANT DENTISTRY

Post-Operative Instructions: Wisdom Teeth Removal

Please follow these instructions closely to support a smooth recovery.

Bleeding

Bite down on the gauze placed over the surgical site, keeping it in place for 30 minutes. After this, the gauze can be exchanged every 30 minutes and replaced until the bleeding slows down or the gauze is pink. Bleeding is normal for the first 48 hours, and redness in your saliva is expected during this time. If bleeding persists, bite down on a warm, damp tea bag for about 30 minutes to help it stop.

Swelling & Bruising

Swelling is expected and typically peaks 3 to 5 days after surgery. Some bruising may also occur, which is normal. For the first 24 hours, apply an ice pack to the outside of your face in 20-minutes-on, 20-minutes-off intervals.

Pain Management

Take 600 mg of ibuprofen (Advil/Motrin), ideally before the numbness wears off — usually 1 to 2 hours after surgery. Three hours later, take 500–1000 mg of acetaminophen (Tylenol). Continue alternating between 600 mg ibuprofen and 500–1000 mg acetaminophen every 3 hours as needed for pain control. If your pain isn't controlled and you were prescribed a narcotic pain medication, you may take this in place of the acetaminophen. We recommend eating or drinking something before taking any pain medication to help avoid an upset stomach. Do not operate a motor vehicle or machinery, or consume alcohol, while taking narcotic pain medication.

Antibiotics

If you were prescribed an antibiotic, take it as directed to help prevent infection. If you develop a rash or other unfavorable reaction, stop taking it and call our office right away.

Eating & Drinking

Plan for a liquid and soft food diet for the first week. On day 1, stick to liquids: Gatorade, broth or cream soups, tea, juice, protein drinks, ice cream, milkshakes, yogurt, pudding, Jell-O, applesauce, etc. From day 2 through day 7, you can move to soft foods like mashed potatoes, pasta, eggs, soft meats, etc. Avoid popcorn, nuts, seeds, chips, or small grains until the extraction sites have closed. No straws for the first 48 hours.

Caring for the Extraction Sites

After your tooth is removed, an open socket remains where it used to be. This will gradually fill in with new tissue over the next month or so, and in the meantime, it's important to keep the area clean. Starting the day after surgery, rinse gently with warm salt water (1/2 teaspoon of salt dissolved in 8 oz of warm water) or chlorhexidine mouthrinse, if prescribed, after eating. If you were given an irrigating syringe, use it to rinse out the lower extraction sites with water after each meal to help prevent food from getting stuck. Avoid vigorous mouth rinsing or touching the surgical site, which can lead to bleeding.

Brushing & Flossing

You may resume normal brushing and flossing the day after surgery, but avoid brushing or flossing directly on the surgical sites.

Smoking & Vaping

Avoid smoking or vaping for at least 48 hours after surgery, though ideally for 2 full weeks. Both can significantly slow healing and increase the risk of complications like dry socket.

Activity

Plan to rest and take it easy for the first two to three days. Avoid strenuous exercise, heavy lifting, and bending over for about a week, since these can increase bleeding and swelling. Move slowly from lying down to standing, since you may feel lightheaded — sit up for about a minute before standing.

Watching for Dry Socket

If pain suddenly worsens a few days after surgery, rather than gradually improving, this can be a sign of dry socket — when the healing blood clot is lost too early. Call our office if this happens; it's treatable.

Sutures (Stitches)

If you had stitches placed, they typically dissolve on their own within 7 to 10 days. If they come out sooner than that, there's no need to worry.

Other Considerations

- Nausea isn't uncommon after surgery. It can often be reduced by taking pain medication with food and water, or by sipping on Coke, tea, or ginger ale.
- Some patients feel hard projections in their mouth after surgery. These are usually just the bony walls that supported the tooth, and they typically smooth out on their own over time.
- If the corners of your mouth feel dry or stretched, they may crack. Keeping your lips moist with a bit of Vaseline can help.
- Jaw stiffness can make opening your mouth difficult for a while. This is normal and improves with time.

Questions before your visit? Call us at (847) 367-4190.
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