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POST-OPERATION INSTRUCTIONS FOR PATIENTS CARE AFTER TOOTH EXTRACTION

Mouth care and management of pain after tooth extraction may differ slightly depending upon which teeth were extracted, number of teeth extracted, level of impaction (wisdom teeth) and relative ease/difficulty of surgery, age, and individual pain tolerance. The following are only guidelines and may be altered to tailor to your specific needs. Your doctor may have told you slightly different instructions than listed here. Our primary goal is *your comfort*. Please do not hesitate to call if you have questions.

If you had **IV sedation for your procedure, or are taking **narcotic pain** medication, do not operate a motor vehicle or heavy machinery for 24 hours*

IMMEDIATELY AFTER YOUR SURGERY:

1. Remove gauze when you get home. Replace only if there is active bleeding. Small amounts of pink/red/orange on the gauze or in saliva is *normal* for the first 24-48 hours. Thick, dark red clots require gauze to be replaced. Properly placed gauze should be placed over the extraction sockets (behind the last tooth for wisdom teeth), in the cheek. Bite down *where it hurts* for 30 minutes. Biting down *hard* is imperative, as it is not the *gauze* that stops the bleeding, it is the *pressure*. If you run out of gauze, bite on a moistened *black tea bag*. If you feel that you cannot stop active bleeding, please call.
2. Take ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) 600mg by mouth. This will help with both pain and swelling. This can be continued *every 6 hours* up to 7 days, or until pain is improved. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) 325-500mg can be taken if you cannot take ibuprofen.
3. A narcotic pain medication may have been prescribed. *It is normal to need narcotic pain medication for adequate pain control during the first 3-4 days and may be needed up to a week.* It can be taken alternating with or at the same time as ibuprofen. Pain will likely be more intense on the 3rd and even 4th days after surgery, bottom teeth generally hurt more than top ones, and pain may not be symmetrical (one side may hurt more or longer than the other). Take with food, as pain medication can cause stomach upset. Narcotics can also cause constipation. Drink fluids and use an over-the-counter stool softener *if this occurs*.
4. Apply ice packs to the outside of your cheeks, on and off for 30 minutes for 24-48 hours. Overnight icing is not necessary. Swelling will likely *increase until the 3rd or 4th day* (especially wisdom teeth).
5. Eat something soft, cool, and mushy. This will help prevent stomach upset, especially with medications.
6. Antibiotics, if prescribed, may be started this evening. If you are nauseated, wait until morning. Take with food and/or probiotic, as antibiotics can cause stomach upset.
7. Numbness will likely last 2-3 hours. *On occasion, but not in all cases*, a longer lasting anesthetic may have been used that lasts up to 12 hours. If numbness persists into the next day, please call.

THE FOLLOWING DAYS:

1. Take pain medication as needed, as described above. If more narcotic pain medication is needed, we will need to see you in the office. We cannot prescribe narcotic pain medications over the phone. Take pain medication with food, as it can cause stomach upset.
2. Soft diet should continue until the initial intense pain period is over and you are able to adequately open your mouth. You may not be able to open your mouth all the way for up to a week (especially wisdom tooth extractions).

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3. Resume normal diet when your mouth is comfortable enough to do so, but avoid foods that can get lodged in extraction sockets (popcorn, peanuts, chips, etc.)
4. Drink plenty of fluids and get adequate rest.
5. Irrigation syringe may be used after 3-4 days to gently remove debris from extraction sockets which you will be given if deemed appropriate. Fill with water, saltwater, or prescription rinse. Irrigate as necessary so the sockets remain free of debris. It may be difficult to remove all food particles, and this is okay. The sockets will heal in 4-6 weeks from the bottom-up, however the gum tissue may close sooner.
6. Avoid rigorous, strenuous exercises and heavy lifting for 1 week.
7. Avoid smoking, spitting, drinking through a straw, or vigorous rinsing for 1 week.
8. Saltwater rinses (1/4 tsp salt dissolved in a glass of warm water) may be used as many times per day as needed to remove food debris; generally, 4x/day is adequate (after meals, before bed). Avoid use of "minty" over-the-counter mouthwashes for 1 week.
9. Stitches, if placed, are dissolvable. They usually last 5-7 days, but may become loose, unravel, or fall out after only 1 day. *This is normal. The stitches do not need to remain in place for more than 1-2 days.* If the stitches become unraveled or fall out on the evening of surgery, *they do not need to be replaced.* Due to the location of the incision for lower wisdom teeth, it may feel like the stitch is in your *cheek*.
10. It is normal for the inside of the extraction socket to have whitish/yellowish/greenish appearance. Yellow *liquid* that is *draining continuously* from a socket may indicate infection. Please see below regarding infections. 11. Low-grade fever is likely for 1-2 days. If questionable, please call.

A note on dry sockets: Although uncommon, they may occur. A true "dry socket" is when the matured blood clot becomes dislodged from within the extraction socket, leaving exposed bone which is very painful. This can occur from heavy lifting, straining, sucking through a straw, smoking, or can happen spontaneously without known cause. This is unlikely to happen prior to the 4th or 5th day after extraction. This is *not* an infection. The primary goal of treating dry socket is pain control. If pain medication is controlling the pain, no treatment is needed. If pain medication is NOT controlling the pain, we will have you come in to the office for placement of a "dry socket dressing." This is a small gauze with medication on it that is placed into the socket; it will need to be changed every 1-2 days. Dry socket dressings can also be placed into sockets that may not have "dry socket" but are simply very painful. If you have concerns of dry socket, please call.

A note on infections: Infections may occur after (most commonly wisdom tooth) extractions, even if a course of antibiotics has been taken post-operatively. Infections rarely occur within the first two weeks. They more commonly occur 2-4 weeks (and as much as 12 weeks) after surgery. This manifests as an area of swelling and/or pain in the cheek after everything has almost completely healed. If you have concerns of infection, please call.

Emergencies: Our offices are open Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9am-5pm, Wednesdays and Fridays from 8am 4pm. If you have an emergency, please call to speak with a doctor. If during business hours, we will likely be able to have you come in if needed. If you have an emergency during non-business hours, please call our office at **203-661-5858, 914-2539088 or 475-328-8500** and the answering service will contact the doctor on-call. **WE DO NOT REFILL PRESCRIPTIONS FOR NARCOTIC PAIN MEDICATION DURING NON-BUSINESS HOURS**

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