

Instructions Following Wisdom Tooth Removal

The removal of impacted wisdom teeth is a routine but serious dental procedure. The after-effects of oral surgery vary per individual. Proper care following the surgery is very important. The following instructions are provided to optimize your healing, and minimize risk of unnecessary pain, swelling and/or infection following your surgery.

Immediately Following Surgery

- The gauze pad placed over the surgical site should be kept in place for a half hour. Soft biting pressure should be maintained with minimal talking or manipulation. After this time, the gauze pad should be removed and discarded. If bleeding persists repeat the process.
- Rinsing, spitting, smoking and drinking through a straw should be avoided for 48 hours following your surgery. This may initiate bleeding by causing the blood clot that has formed to become dislodged.
- Take the prescribed pain medication as soon as you get home, before the local anesthetic (dental freezing) wears off.
- Restrict your activities the day of surgery. Return home immediately following discharge from the office. Sedation effects vary by individual, and you may feel drowsy for a period of time following surgery. Rest, lie down with your head elevated until all the effects of the sedation have disappeared. Do not drive or operate hazardous equipment for 24 hours following your sedation.
- Place the ice packs on the sides of your face where the surgery was performed to help reduce swelling.

Swelling, discomfort, bleeding and restricted jaw function are normal and to be expected. They can be minimized with the following instructions.

BLEEDING: When can I take the gauze out?

One of the most common concerns after surgery is bleeding. A certain amount of bleeding is to be expected following surgery. Slight bleeding, oozing, or redness in the saliva is not uncommon. Some oozing is normal for 24-48 hours following surgery and should not cause concern.

Excessive or prolonged bleeding may be controlled by:

- Relax and avoid any strenuous activity as this increases the heart rate and blood pressure. Sit upright.
- In the case of excessive bleeding, this can be controlled by wiping any old clots from the surgical site with a gauze pad to remove any old blood from your mouth. Then, place a new gauze pad over the surgical site, behind the last molar tooth, and bite firmly, so that your teeth come together, for 30 minutes. Repeat if necessary.
 - When replacing the gauze, make sure that you fold it twice in half so that it is thick enough to apply enough pressure on the wound.
- Avoid chewing on the gauze or talking a lot; bleeding control is optimized with strong and constant pressure
- If you run out of gauze you can bite on a moisten tea bag for 30 minutes. The tannic acid in the tea helps form a clot by contracting bleeding vessels.

If excessive bleeding persists longer than 2-3 hours, call the number given below.

Do not go to sleep with gauze in your mouth.

PAIN: Do I have to take the painkillers?

Unfortunately, most surgeries are accompanied by some degree of discomfort. To help reduce your symptoms we advise you to begin taking the pain medications prescribed within 2 hours following your surgery. This ensures that the medication is acting prior to the local anesthetic wearing off when it may be more difficult to control the pain.

- Take the anti-inflammatory pain medication as prescribed every 6 hours immediately following surgery and continue for 2-3 days following surgery whether there is discomfort or not.
- If you feel continued discomfort, you can also take 1-2 tablets of acetaminophen 500mg (e.g. Extra Strength Tylenol) to help reduce any symptoms. Alternate every three hours between taking the prescribed anti-inflammatory and the acetaminophen to optimize pain control (e.g. take the anti-inflammatory at 9am, the acetaminophen at 12pm, the anti-inflammatory at 3pm, the acetaminophen at 6pm etc).



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It is not uncommon to have a secondary increase in discomfort 2-3 days following surgery that lasts for 24-48 hours. If this discomfort continues to worsen following this time please call me for further instructions.

SWELLING: What can I do to not look like a chipmunk?

Swelling is a normal reaction to any surgery and is to be expected. It is typically located around the mouth, cheeks, lips and eyes. The swelling may not become apparent until the day following surgery and can continue to increase for up to 48 to 72 hours post-operatively.

To minimize swelling, cold packs (zip lock with crushed ice or frozen peas) should be applied to the face adjacent to the surgical area when you return home whether swelling is present or not.

- The ice packs should be left on continuously while you are awake on the surgical day. The next day, the packs can be applied to the cheeks for 30 minutes on and 30 minutes off, as tolerated. After 36 hours, ice has no beneficial effect.
- If swelling or jaw stiffness persists for several days, there is no cause for alarm. This is a normal reaction to surgery and will slowly dissipate. The application of moist heat to the sides of the face after the 72 hours following surgery is beneficial in reducing the amount of the swelling and relaxing sore facial muscles.

JAW TIGHTNESS

It is common for the jaw to stiffen following wisdom tooth removal. You may feel that you cannot open your mouth as widely as before.

DIET: When can I eat? What can I eat?

After surgery &/or sedation, you should drink liquids when you return home, to help you 'regain your energy' more quickly and prevent dehydration.

- At least 5 to 6 glasses of liquid should be taken daily for the first few days.
- Do not drink from a straw; the sucking motion can cause more bleeding by dislodging the blood clot. Drink from a glass or use a spoon for thicker fluids like smoothies.
- Initially, you may feel more comfortable with a softer diet, such as soups, mashed potatoes, overcooked pasta, yogurt, etc.
 - Avoid hard foods that may irritate the wound.
 - Avoid foods that require you to open very wide such as a hamburger.
 - Avoid foods with small nuts, seeds, popcorn that may get into the sockets.
- Eat healthy foods with adequate amounts of calories and protein to give your body the proper nourishment for optimal healing. Do not avoid eating.
- A normal diet can be resumed as soon as you feel comfortable.

If you are diabetic, maintain your normal diet as much as possible and follow your physician's instructions regarding your insulin schedule.

ORAL HYGIENE: WHEN CAN I BRUSH MY TEETH?

Keeping your mouth clean after surgery is essential to reduce pain and lessen the incidence of infection.

- No rinsing of any kind should be performed until the day following surgery. You can brush your teeth the night of surgery with a small amount of toothpaste or warm, salt water. Be gentle in the area of the extractions and don't be alarmed if a small amount of bleeding starts again.
- 24 hours after surgery you should begin rinsing at least 5 to 6 times a day with a cup of warm water mixed with a teaspoon of salt.
- It is important to keep the extraction socket clean with gentle rinsing or by using the irrigation syringe provided by placing the tip of the syringe into the socket and gently irrigate with warm salt water. Again, start this only 24 hours after your surgery. Please do this for 7-10 days following the surgery.
- Avoid using Listerine or any commercial mouth rinses as alcohol contained within them slows the healing process.
- If the corners of your mouth become cracked or red during healing, you can keep the lips and area moist with an ointment such as Vaseline or Blistex.

ANTIBIOTICS: DO I HAVE TAKE THEM?

If you were given a prescription for antibiotics, they should be taken as prescribed until finished.



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- If you develop a rash or other unfavorable reaction, call the office for further information.
- If you are currently taking oral contraceptives (Birth Control), for any reason other than regulation, you should use an alternate method of birth control for the remainder of this cycle.

STITCHES & EXTRACTION SOCKET

Sutures/stitches are placed to minimize bleeding and to help with healing. They will dissolve on their own within 7-10 days.

- Sometimes they become dislodged early. This is no cause for alarm. Unless significant bleeding begins you do not need to have them replaced.
- Loose stitches can be removed with clean tweezers or the long ends can be trimmed.
- The holes remaining where the teeth were removed are normal. The site will gradually fill in with new tissue over the next 3 to 4 weeks.

DISCOLOURATION:

In some cases, discolouration of the skin follows the swelling. The development of black, blue, green or yellow discolouration is due to blood spreading along the tissues. This is a normal process that may occur 2-3 days following tooth removal. Moist heat applied to the area will speed up its removal.

NAUSEA & VOMITTING

- In the event of vomiting following surgery, do not take anything by mouth for at least an hour including your prescribed medications.
- Sip on carbonated drinks (ginger-ale, coke) or Red Rose tea. You should sip it slowly over a 15-minute period.
- If this is not completely effective you can also use Gravol from the drug store and take as directed.

DRY SOCKET – How will I know if I have one?

A small percentage of patients can experience an increase in jaw discomfort 5 to 6 days after surgery. The blood clot at the surgical site may be prematurely lost leading to exposure of bone to the mouth - this is a dry socket. A dry socket is not an infection.

- Cigarette smoking and poor oral hygiene increase the risk of dry socket!
- There will be a noticeable, localized persistent pain in the jaw area, often radiating toward the ear and forward along the jaw which may cause other teeth to ache.
- You may also experience increased bad breath or a bad taste in the mouth.
- This discomfort will pass and can often be managed with the pain medications prescribed. If you do not see an improvement after the first few days or if the pain is too severe, please call the office to organize a new pain medication prescription or possible placement of a medicated dressing into the extraction site.

OTHER COMPLICATIONS

If numbness of the lip, chin or tongue occurs there is no cause for alarm. As discussed before surgery, this is usually temporary in nature. Be careful to not bite or burn the areas as there is decreased sensation. Call Dr. Specht to let her know and she will continue to follow-up with you during its course.

A slight elevation of temperature following surgery is not uncommon. If the temperature persists you can take Tylenol to help reduce it, take-in plenty of fluids. Notify the office if it continues longer than 48 hours for continued follow-up.

Occasionally, patients may feel hard projections in the sites with their tongue. They are not pieces of tooth but the bony walls which supported the tooth. These projections usually smooth themselves out spontaneously. As well, small chips of bone may appear in the area from a few days to a few weeks after surgery. You can remove them yourself or you can contact the office for an appointment.

Please be advised that if you are admitted to a hospital within 10 days of your procedure, for any reason, please notify the office at your earliest convenience.

Your case is individual. No two mouths are alike. It is my desire that your recovery be as smooth and easy as possible. If you have any questions about your progress or any symptoms you are experiencing, please call Dr. Specht at 780-710-0178 or 587-200-8708 to obtain advice and, if necessary, organize an additional appointment.



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