



Home care after an extraction

The initial healing period after an extraction usually take one to two weeks, and you'll likely experience some swelling for the first 48 hours.

Before the procedure began, you were given an anesthetic to ensure your comfort. This anesthetic typically leaves your lips, teeth and tongue feeling numb after the appointment depending on the injection site. For this reason, you should avoid chewing for two hours following the surgery, or until the numbness has completely worn off.

Some discomfort after the extraction is normal. An over-the-counter pain reliever, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen, is usually sufficient. We can also give you a prescription for a stronger pain reliever if needed.

During the first 24 hours

It's important that a blood clot forms on the extraction site to stop bleeding, reduce pain and speed healing. To protect the clot and avoid the pain of dry socket:

- Bite on a gauze pad firmly for 30 minutes. If bleeding or oozing continues, bite down on a clean pad or moist tea bag for 30 minutes.
- Don't spit, and don't suck on candies or through a straw.
- Don't rinse your mouth, and don't brush or floss next to the site.
- Don't smoke or use tobacco. Avoid tobacco for at least 72 hours because it slows healing.
- Avoid sneezing and coughing, have sinus or allergy medication on hand if necessary.
- Limit yourself to calm activities and elevate your head with pillows when you lie down to reduce bleeding.
- Don't drink hot, carbonated or alcoholic drink, and avoid hot or spicy foods.

To control discomfort, take pain medication before the anesthetic has worn off or as recommended.

To keep swelling to a minimum, use an ice bag over the area, 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off.

When the numbness has worn off completely, drink lots of fluids and eat only soft nutritious foods such as eggs or yogurt, chewing on the opposite side.



After the first 24 hours

Begin to eat normally as soon as it's comfortable.

Resume brushing and flossing, but clean gently around the site for about a week. Do not use a Water Pik during the first week, as this can dislodge the blood clot.

If antibiotics were prescribed, continue to take them for the indicated length of time, even if all symptoms and signs of infection are gone.

Reduce soreness or swelling by applying moist heat. Swelling usually starts to go down after 48 hours.

Further reduce swelling by rinsing your mouth very gently with warm salt water. Use about one teaspoon of salt per glass of warm water. Rinse two to three times a day for the week following the extraction. An irrigation device/syringe may be provided to aid with the care of the site.



When to call us

It's normal to experience some discomfort for several days after a tooth extraction, but call us right away if you have:

- Heavy or increased bleeding
- Pain or swelling that increases or continues beyond two or three days.
- A bad taste or odor in your mouth.
- A reaction to the medication.

Do not worry about the stitches. Stitches (also known as sutures) are usually placed to control bleeding, aid healing and help prevent food from collecting in the surgical site – especially for lower teeth. The sutures we use dissolve in 3 to 5 days and do not have to be removed unless indicated by Dr. Jess.

Any swelling, soreness or stiffness in the jaw muscles that is present 1 week after surgery can be relieved by applying a warm moist towel to the affected side of the face several times a day. Moist heat should only be used 1 week following surgery.

The infamous dry socket

Dry sockets continue to be the most common problem people experience following dental surgery. They arise due to premature loss of a blood clot in the empty tooth socket and affect approximately one out of five patients. This seems to occur with greater frequency in people who smoke or are taking birth control pills. While both the upper and lower jaw can be affected, they usually occur in the lower jaw on the third to fifth day. They cause a deep, dull, continuous aching on the affected side(s). Patients may first notice the pain starting in the ear radiating down towards the chin. It frequently begins in the middle of the night, and Motrin medication usually doesn't help. Treatment involves placing a medicated dressing in the "empty" tooth socket. This will help decrease the pain and protect the socket from food particles. The effectiveness in alleviating the pain lasts for 24-48 hours and usually will require dressing changes every day or two for five to seven days. Dressings are usually removed when you have been pain free for 2-3 days. The dressing doesn't aid in healing. The only reason to place a dressing is for pain control. If Motrin is controlling the pain, the socket will heal without a dressing. An irrigation device will be given to you to help keep food particles from lodging in the extraction site following the removal of the dressing.

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