

POST ORAL SURGERY INSTRUCTIONS AND RETURN APPOINTMENT

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WHEN YOU GET HOME:

Wash your hands and remove the gauze compresses. A little bleeding is normal, but you should not be able to see active bleeding coming from the surgical site. If so, fold another piece of gauze and compress it against the gum tissue by biting on it. You may need to replace this gauze every half hour or so until you can no longer see active bleeding. Again, some blood on the gauze or in your saliva is not a problem and normal for several hours. A moistened tea bag may be used instead of gauze (black tea such as Lipton works best) and may help stop any persistent bleeding.

DO NOT SUCK ON STRAWS, SMOKE CIGARETTES, RINSE VIGOROUSLY, OR DRINK HOT LIQUIDS OR SODAS FOR THE FIRST FEW DAYS FOLLOWING SURGERY TO PREVENT THE LOSS OF THE BLOOD CLOTS. DO NOT DRIVE A VEHICLE OR MAKE IMPORTANT DECISIONS FOR 24 HOURS AFTER SURGERY IF YOU HAVE I.V. SEDATION OR A GENERAL ANESTHETIC.

PAIN MEDICATION

If your procedure was relatively simple, your doctor will prescribe pain medication at your request, but may recommend "over the counter" medications assuming they will be adequate. If you have had wisdom teeth removed or bone grafting, we will prescribe something stronger, most commonly Vicodin. The actual medication and dosage may vary based on your allergies and tolerances. We usually recommend you go home and take something for pain before the numbness wears off from the local anesthetic (which will usually last for an hour). It is always better to "stay ahead" of the discomfort than to try to catch up after it starts to hurt. If you have had an I.V. sedation or a general anesthetic and have an empty stomach, we recommend getting something in your stomach first (yogurt, pudding, smoothie, etc.) before taking the pain medication. This helps prevent possible nausea from the medication.

All pain medications will wear off at different times for everyone. The recommendation is again to stay ahead of the pain by taking another pain medication when the first starts to wear off, whenever it starts to wear off. As long as the medication you are taking is keeping you comfortable after you take it, you can continue to take it as needed. If the medication you have for pain is not working, you can:

1. Call the office for a prescription medication if all you are taking is over-the-counter.
2. If you still have pain 30-45 minutes after taking Vicodin, take Ibuprofen (Advil, Aleve, Motrin) to potentiate the Vicodin. For instance, you can take 2 Advil or a stronger Motrin an hour or so after taking Vicodin. Many times this will control the pain. If needed, you can take a second Vicodin although this may make you drowsy, or simply alternate a Vicodin with Ibuprofen every few hours.
3. If you are taking Vicodin and it just is not working, call the office and we can prescribe a different pain medication (usually Tylenol with Codeine) over the phone. Stronger medications than this (Percocet, etc.) will require a special written prescription which will require you to come back to the office when it is open to obtain. Thankfully this is rarely needed except for patients where normal prescription medication does not work effectively.

ANTIBIOTICS

If there is an infection already active when you present for treatment, or if there is bone exposed during your surgical procedure, your doctor will usually prescribe antibiotics to resolve or prevent further infection. Amoxicillin is our most commonly prescribed antibiotic, but this varies based on allergies and side effects. Antibiotics can be taken 1-4 times per day depending on the drug and the dosage, so be sure to note this on your prescription when you pick it up. With wisdom tooth extractions, since these are most commonly elective and patients do not have existing infections, we will recommend not to start the antibiotic until the evening of the first day to eliminate possible side effects from taking both pain medication and antibiotics in close proximity in time after surgery. In any case, it is not necessary to get up in the middle of the night to take an antibiotic, simply divide the number of dosages into the time you are awake (for instance four times a day would be: breakfast, lunch, dinner and before going to bed). It is usually recommended not to drink alcoholic beverages while taking antibiotics as it can cause them to be less effective, but beer and wine are not as critical as hard liquor. (*Never drink alcohol while taking narcotic pain medications.*) Always take an antibiotic until the prescription is finished unless otherwise recommended by your doctor. If you have any concerns or side effects, do not hesitate to contact our office.

ANTI-INFLAMMATORIES

With wisdom tooth extractions, and other bone surgeries, the doctor will usually give you a dose of an anti-inflammatory through an I.V. during the procedure. This will work very effectively for one day only. As you are prone to swelling for several days, we will usually prescribe an anti-inflammatory dose pack (Medrol) that you should start the morning after surgery and use as instructed until it is gone. If you stop taking it before then, you may encounter an unexpected increase in swelling.

ICE PACKS AND SWELLING

For most surgeries we will recommend using ice packs over the face adjacent to the surgery, alternating them every 10-15 minutes off and on or from side to side of the face until bedtime. These may be continued the following day if swelling persists or increases. Most swelling should be subsiding after two days, otherwise check with your doctor. We also recommend resting for the first two days to decrease bleeding, swelling and discomfort. Sleeping on two pillows may also be more comfortable.

DIET

A nutritionally balanced diet is very important to healing. As mentioned earlier, do not drink anything hot or suck on straws for the first 24 hours. Anything warm, cool or cold is fine. Start with yogurt, pudding, smoothies or blended foods, then progress to pasta, scrambled eggs, or fruit. You should be back to a normal diet excluding hard or crunchy things within several days to a week. In any case make sure you stay hydrated after surgery even if you have a less than normal appetite.

NAUSEA

It is rare to have nausea after surgery, but you may become nauseated from swallowing blood or some of the post operative medications. If so, drink clear liquids such as mild tea or clear broth; then progress to soft unspicy foods before resuming a normal diet. If the situation gets worse, you may throw up. This will usually solve the problem, but if nausea persists, or you vomit again, call your doctor.

SHARP BONE EDGES – SUTURES

If you feel something hard when you place your tongue on the surgical site, you may think it is part of a tooth. This is usually the boney wall which originally supported the tooth. Leave it alone and it will heal normally. Sutures will also dissolve and fall out on their own. Try not to play with them with your tongue. We can evaluate them at your post-operative appointment if they are still bothering you. Usually your doctor will elect to remove them if they are still there.

TWO DAYS AFTER SURGERY

We strongly recommend against vigorous rinsing for the first two days following surgery. However after 48 hours warm salt water rinses will help decrease inflammation during healing, and help cleanse the surgical areas. Dissolve one level teaspoon of salt in an 8-ounce glass of warm (not hot) water. Allow the water to sit in your mouth for at least 30 seconds and then spit it out gently. You can use the entire glass of the solution for rinsing if you wish. This can be done 3 – 5 times a day for the next few days.

SWELLING AND STIFFNESS

Normally the swelling decreases after 48 hours and so does jaw stiffness. To enhance this process you can apply heat to the outside of your face using a warm, moist wash cloth, hot water bottle or heating pad. It is recommended to put a thin towel over your face if using the hot water bottle or heating pad to protect the skin. This can be done for 15-20 minutes at a time several times as day as needed.

IF YOU HAVE ANY POST-OPERATIVE CONCERNS, PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO CALL OUR OFFICE. ONE OF OUR DOCTORS IS ALWAYS ON CALL 24 HOURS A DAY: (760) 942-1333.

NEXT APPOINTMENT: _____