

# Routine Postoperative Instructions

## Wound Care and Bleeding

1. Bite firmly on gauze pack that has been placed, until you arrive home, then remove it gently.
2. Do not smoke for at least 12 hours, because this will promote bleeding and interfere with healing. Preferably, you will not smoke throughout the duration of your healing. Some patients may find this event to be a wonderful opportunity to break from tobacco use. If you would like some tips on how to stop smoking, please let the doctor or assistant know.
3. Some blood will ooze from the area of surgery and is normal. You may find a bloodstain on your pillow in the morning, so it is advisable to use an old pillowcase the first night.
4. Do not spit or suck thick fluids through a straw, because this promotes bleeding.
5. If bleeding begins again, place a small damp gauze pack directly over the tooth socket and bite firmly for 30 minutes.
6. Keep your head elevated with several pillows or sit in a lounge chair.

## Discomfort and Swelling

1. Some discomfort is normal after surgery. It can be controlled but not eliminated by taking the pain pills you have been prescribed or directed to take.
2. Take your pain pills with a glass of water and with a small amount of food (if the pills cause nausea).
3. Do not drive, operate heavy machinery, or drink alcohol if you take prescription pain pills with narcotic components.
4. Swelling after surgery is a normal body reaction. It reaches its maximum about 48 hours after surgery and usually lasts 4 to 6 days. After this period of time, any swelling should begin to diminish. If swelling or bruising should worsen after this time, you must call the office immediately.
5. Applying ice packs over the area of surgery for the first 12 hours helps control swelling and may help the area to be more comfortable. A simple way to make an ice pack is to take frozen vegetables and wrap them in a thin hand or dish towel.
6. If discomfort worsens after a few days, and becomes a constant dull ache that is very painful, you may have developed a condition known as dry socket. This condition is self limiting, and treatment is limited to applying dressings to the affected area over a period

of two weeks or more. Some patients find that over the counter Tylenol or Advil taken every 4 hours is enough to bear the discomfort. Please call the office for more information.

## Diet and Oral Hygiene

1. It is important to drink a large volume of fluids. Remember not to drink thick fluids through a straw, because this may promote bleeding.
2. Eat normal regular meals as soon as possible after surgery. Cold, soft food such as ice cream or yogurt may be the most comfortable for the first day. Avoid hard foods, popcorn, or nuts.
3. Do not rinse your mouth or brush your teeth for the first 8 hours after surgery.
4. After that, rinse gently with warm salt water (1/2teaspoon of salt in 8 ounces of warm water) as needed.
5. Beginning the next day, brush your teeth gently, but avoid the area of surgery.

## Call the Office if:

1. You experience excessive discomfort that you cannot control with your pain pills.
2. You have bleeding that you cannot control by biting on gauze.
3. You have increased swelling after the third day following your surgery.
4. You feel that you have a fever.
5. You have any questions.

## Miscellaneous

1. Avoid any strenuous activity for 12 hours after your surgery.
2. Sometimes small pieces of bone, called sequestra, will work their way out of the site of surgery. This is a frequent occurrence and should not be a cause for alarm. Simply allow the pieces to dislodge themselves. If a large bony sequestrum is present, the doctor may need to perform additional surgery.
3. If dissolving stitches have been placed in the area of your surgery, you do not need to return to have them removed. After 7 to 10 days, if there are still fragments of stitch material left, you may tease them out and throw them away. If non-dissolving stitches have been placed, you will need to have them removed after 7 to 10 days.

4. You may experience some mild bruising in the area of your surgery. This is a normal response in some persons and should not be a cause for alarm. It will disappear in 7 to 14 days.
5. After surgery you may experience jaw muscle stiffness and limited opening of your mouth. This is normal and will improve within a few weeks. You may accelerate healing by using a warm compress. A quick way to make a warm compress is to place a damp hand towel into the microwave oven and heat. You will have to experiment with the proper amount of "cooking" time. Try to heat the hand towel to a temperature that is hot, but tolerable. Place the warm compress over the side of your face and/or jaw joint that is affected until the heat has notably diminished. Repeat this as often as possible.