

Mt. Vernon Oral Surgery Center
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POST-OPERATION INSTRUCTIONS FOR PATIENTS

DAY OF SURGERY:

IMMEDIATELY AFTER SURGERY. Patients who received a general anesthetic should return home from the office immediately upon discharge, and lie down with the head elevated until all the effects of the anesthetic have disappeared. Anesthetic effects vary by individual, and you may feel drowsy for a short period of time or for several hours. You should not operate any mechanical equipment or drive a motor vehicle for at least 12 hours or longer if you feel any residual effect from the anesthetic.

ORAL HYGIENE AND CARE. Do not disturb the surgical area today. Bite down gently but firmly on the gauze pack that we have initially placed over the surgical area, making sure that they remain in place. Do not change them for the first hour unless the bleeding is not being controlled. This is important to allow blood clot formation on the surgery site. The gauze may be changed when necessary and/or repositioned for comfort. DO NOT drink with a straw and DO NOT rinse or brush your teeth vigorously or probe the area with the tongue, any objects or your fingers. You may brush your teeth gently, carefully avoiding the surgical site. **DO NOT SMOKE** for at least 72 hours, since it is detrimental to the healing process.

Start rinsing your mouth with a warm salt water rinse (1/2 tsp. salt with 1 cup water) every 2-3 hours. Continue this for several days, then rinse 3-4 times a day for the next 2 weeks. You may start normal toothbrushing the day after the surgery or after bleeding is controlled. It is imperative to keep your mouth clean, since an accumulation of food or debris may promote infection.

BLEEDING. Some bleeding is normal, and blood-tinged saliva may be present for 24 hours. This may be controlled by placing fresh gauze over the surgical area and biting down firmly for 30-60 minutes.

STEADY BLEEDING. Bleeding should not be severe. If bleeding persists, this may be due to the gauze pads being clenched between the teeth rather than exerting pressure on the surgery site. Try repositioning the gauze. If bleeding persists or becomes heavy, substitute a moist tea bag (first soaked in hot water, squeezed dry and wrapped in a moist gauze) on the area for 20-30 minutes. If bleeding continues, please call our office.

SWELLING OR BRUISING. Swelling is to be expected, and usually reaches its maximum in 48 hours. To minimize swelling, cold packs or ice bag wrapped in a towel should be applied to the face adjacent to the surgical area. This should be applied 20 minutes on then removed for 20 minutes during the first 12-24 hours after surgery. If you were prescribed medicine for the control of swelling, be sure to take it as directed. After 24 hours, it is usually best to switch from using the cold pack to applying moist heat or heating pad to the same area, until swelling has receded. Bruising may also occur, but should disappear soon. Tightness of the jaw muscles may cause difficulty in opening the mouth. This should disappear within 7 days. Keep lips moist with cream or vaseline to prevent cracking or chapping.

DIET. Eat any nourishing food that can be taken with comfort. It is advisable to confine the first day's food intake to bland liquids or pureed or soft foods. Avoid foods like nuts, sunflower seeds or popcorn, which may get lodged in the socket areas. Over the next several days, you may progress to more solid foods. Proper nourishment aids in the healing process. If you are a diabetic, maintain your normal diet as much as possible and follow your physician's instructions regarding your insulin schedule.

PAIN AND MEDICATIONS. Unfortunately, most oral surgery is accompanied by some degree of discomfort. Take the pain medication prescribed as directed. The local anesthetic administered with the general anesthetic during your surgery normally has a 3-hour duration, and it may be difficult to control the pain once the anesthetic wears off. We therefore, advise you to take the pain medication 2 hours immediately after your surgery. If you do not achieve adequate pain relief, you may supplement each pill with an analgesic such as Advil or motrin. Taking the pain medication with soft food and a large volume of water will lessen any side effects of nausea or stomach upset.

ORAL HYGIENE. Keeping your mouth clean after oral surgery is essential. Keep using warm salt water rinses to rinse your mouth at least 2-3 times daily for the next five days. Begin your normal toothbrushing routine as soon as possible after surgery. Soreness and swelling may prevent rigorous brushing of all areas, but make every effort to clean your teeth within your comfort level.

CARE OF SURGICAL AREA. Apply warm compresses to the skin overlying areas of swelling for 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off to help soothe these tender areas. This will also aid in reducing swelling and stiffness. If you were given an irrigating syringe, start using it the third day after surgery to keep the sockets clean. Fill it with warm salt water and irrigate any open sockets gently, especially after eating.

OTHER POSSIBLE POST-SURGERY EFFECTS

DRY SOCKETS. The blood clot on the surgical site may be lost causing a dry socket (usually on the 3rd to 5th day). There will be a noticeable, distinct, persistent pain in the jaw area, often radiating toward the ear and forward along the jaw which may cause other teeth to ache. If you do not see steady improvement during the first few days after surgery or if severe pain persists, please call the office to report these symptoms.

SKIN DISCOLORATION. This may be expected, and is usually limited to the neck or cheek area near the surgical site. This is caused by bleeding through the mucous membranes of the mouth beneath the skin and appears as a bruise. If discoloration occurs, it often takes a week for this to completely disappear. Occasionally, the arm or hand near the site where the needle was placed to administer IV drugs may remain inflamed and tender. This is caused by chemical irritation in the vein. Aspirin and application of heat on the area will usually correct these symptoms.

NUMBNESS. Loss of sensation of the lip and chin may occur, usually following lower wisdom teeth removal. This is usually temporary and disappears within a few days or weeks. Occasionally, some numbness may persist for months, due to the close association of the roots of the teeth to the nerve that supplies sensation to these areas described.

It is our desire that your recovery be as smooth and pleasant as possible. If you have any questions about your progress or any symptoms you are experiencing, please call our office at 703-780-4422. After office hours, you may call our 24-hour answering service and our doctor will contact you as soon as possible. Call 911 if you have a medical emergency.