



TOOTHLOGY

Extraction Home Care Instructions

Take your first dose of pain medication before the local anesthesia completely wears off to establish a baseline of comfort and stay ahead of the pain curve. Managing post-extraction recovery requires a strict balance of proactive pain control, clot preservation, and swelling reduction.

Comprehensive Pain Management Schedule

- **Preemptive Medication:** Take 400mg to 600mg of Ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) shortly following your procedure while your mouth is still numb.
- **The Combination Method:** If you are able to take these over the counter pain medications, alternating Ibuprofen (Motrin/Advil) and Acetaminophen (Tylenol) provides highly effective, non-opioid pain relief. Take up to 800mg of Ibuprofen, followed by 500mg of Acetaminophen 4 hours later, repeating this staggered cycle as needed.
- **Clock-Based Dosing:** Take your medications on a strict schedule for the first 24 to 48 hours rather than waiting for severe pain to wake you up or return.
- **Prescription Narcotics:** If you are prescribed strong "rescue" medications (like hydrocodone or Percocet), take them exactly as directed for severe breakthrough pain. Never mix these with alcohol, and do not take additional Tylenol if your prescription already contains acetaminophen.
- **Antibiotics:** If these medications have been prescribed, the entire course should be taken until finished.
- **Protect Your Stomach:** Always take oral pain medications with a small amount of soft food, milk, or yogurt to prevent nausea and stomach irritation.

Blood Clot Preservation & Bleeding Control

- **Firm Gauze Pressure:** Keep the original gauze pad in place for 30 to 45 minutes after surgery, biting down with steady, firm pressure.
- **Changing the Gauze:** Replace the pad when it becomes completely soaked. Dampen the new gauze slightly with water so it does not stick to and pull away the newly formed blood clot.
- **The Tea Bag Trick:** If mild bleeding or oozing persists after a few hours, bite down on a moistened black tea bag for 30 minutes. The natural tannic acids in black tea constrict blood vessels and actively help clots form.
- **Passive Drooling:** Do not spit out blood or saliva. Spitting creates negative pressure in the mouth that dislodges the clot. Instead, lean over the sink and let excess fluids passively drip out.

- **No Smoking or Drinking Through a Straw:** The negative pressure previously mentioned can result in dislodging of the clot, resulting in a dry socket. This a painful complication that can typically be avoided by taking special precautions with the surgical site.
- **Activity:** Avoid strenuous activity during the first 48 hours following a surgical procedure.

Managing Swelling and Inflammation

- **Ice Face Routine:** Apply an ice pack wrapped in a cloth to the side of your face in a "20 minutes on, 20 minutes off" cycle for the first 24 hours.
- **Elevate Your Head:** Use an extra pillow to keep your head propped up higher than your heart when resting or sleeping. This lowers blood pressure in the facial tissues, lowering throbbing pain and swelling.
- **Transition to Heat:** Swelling typically peaks around day 2 or 3. After the first 48 hours, switch from ice packs to warm, moist compresses to relax jaw muscles and boost healing circulation.

Diet and Oral Hygiene Protocols

- **24-Hour Food Guide:** Stick to cool or room-temperature liquids and very soft foods like smoothies (eaten with a spoon), applesauce, pudding, and lukewarm broths. Avoid hot foods or carbonated beverages on day one.
- **Subsequent Days:** Gradually transition to soft solids like scrambled eggs, mashed potatoes, and pasta as your jaw comfort allows. Avoid rice, seeds, popcorn, or crunchy foods for at least 5 days, as tiny particles can get trapped in the open socket.
- **Gentle Saltwater Rinses:** Starting 24 hours after surgery, gently rinse your mouth with a solution of 1/2 teaspoon of salt in a glass of warm water 4 to 5 times a day, especially after eating. Do not swish aggressively; tilt your head side to side and let the water fall out into the sink.
- **Brushing Constraints:** Brush and floss your remaining teeth normally starting the day after surgery, but completely avoid touching or irritating the extraction site with your toothbrush bristles.

When to Call Your Dentist

Contact our office immediately if you experience any of these warning signs:

- Uncontrolled bleeding that completely fills your mouth with bright red blood despite direct gauze pressure.
- Severe, throbbing pain that worsens after 3 days and is not relieved by your pain medications (a primary sign of dry socket).
- A sudden spike in body temperature or a fever over 101°F.
- Increased swelling or difficulty swallowing and breathing after the third postoperative day.
- Any of these previously listed symptoms associated with an unpleasant taste or odor in your mouth.