

Post Operative Care

What to expect:

Certain tissue responses ALWAYS follow surgical procedure. Oral surgery, be it simple tooth extraction or more complicated, is a surgical procedure and the following responses can be expected.

1. **SWELLING:** Swelling will vary from slight to extreme puffiness. There is no way to predict the amount you will have. Usually, fair-skinned people experience more swelling. Maximum swelling occurs in 2-3 days after surgery and should recede afterwards.
2. **TRISMUS:** The muscles that control your mouth are directly involved with impacted teeth. They are very often divided or reflected to **gain** access to the surgical areas. Of course, they will be sore and may not function properly for several days.
3. **PARESTHESIA:** The nerves that supply the lower jaw, lips, gums, tongue, and teeth pass through the surgical area. They are sometimes disrupted by the surgery or by the local anesthesia needle. In most instances this is only a minor nuisance and will disappear in a few days or a week. On rare occasions this may persist for a month or longer.
4. **SWALLOWING:** You will experience some difficulty in swallowing. This is transient and will disappear in a few days.
5. **BRUISING:** Some bruising on your face may be visible. This is due to leaking of blood into the tissue space. Discoloration will range from blue to a yellowish green and will persist for about a week. The discoloration may "gravitate" to areas below the surgery.
6. **DISCOMFORT:** Any injury to the body causes discomfort. It may vary from minimal to extreme discomfort depending upon the individual patient and the extent of surgery.
7. **MALAISE:** It is normal for you to feel tired for a few days after surgery and/or while taking medication for pain.
8. **FEVER:** A temperature of 101°F may occur during the first 2-3 days. It normally responds to two aspirin or two Tylenol every four hours. Make sure your fluid intake is high.
9. **DRY SOCKET:** Sometimes the body will not properly nourish the blood clot in a tooth socket. The clot will then disintegrate and wash out. This leaves the bone uncovered and it becomes very painful. Should this happen to you, you will begin to notice on the third or fourth post-operative day that you feel worse and not better. The pain will frequently occur in your ear. If this happens, please call the office so we can help you.

Things for you to do:

Generally speaking, YOU MAY DO ANYTHING THAT YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE WHILE DOING. IF ANY ACTIVITY MAKES YOU FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE... STOP!

1. DO NOT SMOKE, EXPECTORATE (SPIT), OR USE STRAWS FOR 48 HOURS.

2. BLEEDING: When you leave the office, you will be biting into a gauze pad that has been placed over the surgical area. MAINTAIN CONSTANT PRESSURE OVER THE PAD FOR AT LEAST 1 HOUR. DO NOT DISTURB. THIS IS A SURGICAL DRESSING. If, after removal, active bleeding continues, replace this dressing with a fresh one and continue to maintain pressure for another hour. Repeat this cycle until the bleeding stops. If bleeding persists, saturate a tea bag in cool water, place over the area of bleeding, and maintain biting pressure for at least 30 minutes. Expect slight oozing for 48-72 hours. Place a folded towel under the head to protect bed clothing from drainage.

3. Remove gauze from the patient's mouth before giving medications, drinks, or food.

4. PAIN MEDICATION: If pain medication has been prescribed, it is suggested that you start the medication before the local anesthesia wears off. BEFORE ANY PAIN MEDICATION IS GIVEN, TAKE NOURISHMENT such as soft drinks, Gatorade, soups, or warm broths. Most of the pain medications we prescribe have Tylenol combined with some narcotic. If you can take Advil, Motrin, etc., doing so between the doses of the other pain medication will help you and decrease the amount of narcotic pain medicine you will require.

5. NAUSEA: This is usually due to not eating or taking too much pain medication. If you were given a prescription for nausea medicine, you may want to wait to have it filled until you determine whether or not it will be needed.

6. DIET: Eat anything that you can chew or swallow with comfort. YOU MUST KEEP YOURSELF WELL NOURISHED. Milk products may cause nausea, but warm broths, soups, soft drinks or Gatorade will usually make you feel better.

7. DO NOT RINSE THE MOUTH FOR THE FIRST 24 HOURS following your surgery. This will often cause clot breakdown and continued bleeding. In twenty-four hours you may begin active mouth soaks with warm, mild salt solution. Do not pump water around in your mouth; just let it soak. The more this is done, the better you will feel. You may brush your teeth by using an extremely soft-bristled brush.

8. Swelling and discoloration are not uncommon and need not cause alarm. Apply a hand towel-covered ice bag (small ziplock bag) to the skin over the surgery area intermittently (on 30 minutes, off 15 minutes) during the first 24 hours. Elevating the head during the first 24-72 hours may help decrease the swelling. After the first 24 hours, you may apply a moist heat compress to the skin over the surgery area.

9. SUTURES: If stitches have been placed in the surgical area, they will either dissolve on their own or will be removed when you return for your post-operative visit.

10. WORKING, DRIVING, ETC.: You will need to use good judgment concerning whether to return to work, to drive, or to manage anything complicated. The pain medication and the results of the surgery may interfere with your judgment. If you are feeling poorly or can notice that you are affected by the medications, stay home and take care of yourself. Hair washing can be done any time you desire.

11. Take prescribed medication (antibiotics, pain medicine, etc.) ONLY as prescribed. Instructions will be on the bottle of medication. If you are unsure about how to take a medication, you must call the office. Do not take other depressant medication (example: alcohol, tranquilizers, recreational drugs, or other narcotic pain medications) with your prescribed pain medicine as this can cause severe adverse effects.

12. SORE ARM: Sometimes the medications given into the vein in your arm will cause the vein to be sore and feel hard. If this happens, place a hot, wet towel over the area for 30 minutes three times a day.

We hope your recovery is an easy one and sincerely desire to help you in any way that we can. If you are worried or need help, please call us.

After business hours (evenings, weekends, and holidays), our office phone is answered by an answering service. They offer limited non-medical advice and will contact the doctor on call, if necessary.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS, PLEASE MAKE AN ATTEMPT TO CALL DURING OUR REGULAR OFFICE HOURS. MONDAY-THURSDAY 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM, FRIDAY 8:00 AM – 12:00 NOON.

The doctors do not have access to your chart after hours, and this will help us to provide you with the best possible care.

Thank you,
Doctors Watts, Zakkak, and Watts