

Postoperative Care Instructions

1. **Pain:** Mild to severe pain is often expected. Severe pain may be lessened by using the prescribed drugs as directed. If possible, the initial dose of pain medication should be taken before the numb feeling begins to wear off. When possible, plain Tylenol or ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil) may be taken instead of the prescribed drug for mild discomfort. These medications, especially ibuprofen, often lessen the requirement for narcotic pain control. After the removal of lower wisdom teeth, one may experience a deep, throbbing pain beginning 3 to 4 days or more postoperatively. This may be evidence of a “dry socket”, a variably painful condition which is usually treated by either a strong dose of anti-inflammatory medications for a mild dry socket or with a special dressing that may be placed in our office for those that are more severe. If this occurs, please contact our office at your earliest convenience for treatment or further directions.
2. **Bleeding:** Some bleeding following surgery is to be expected and may continue for 24 to 48 hours postoperatively. A gauze pack is usually inserted over the operative site in our office and should be held in place for at least 2 hours. If brisk bleeding occurs, reinsert a fresh gauze pack thick enough to allow good pressure by firmly biting your teeth together. A teabag moistened in warm water, wrapped in moist gauze and placed over the operative site with firm biting pressure may also be helpful. Remember that firm, continuous pressure by biting on a gauze pack is the most effective means of controlling severe oozing. It is usually not necessary to use gauze packs for over 2 hours after the surgery unless bleeding is persistent. Patients on anticoagulants may experience prolonged bleeding. Relaxing, keeping the head elevated, applying ice and the using the above listed measures are usually sufficient to control bleeding even in those patients who could not come off of their anticoagulants.
3. **Swelling/Bruising:** Swelling and bruising may be expected and may not reach a peak until the third day following surgery. Minimize swelling by applying ice packs to the face over the operated area as much as possible for the first 24 to 48 hours after surgery. Applying the ice pack 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off on the affected side will help to limit swelling, bruising, and even reduce some of the soreness commonly associated with the surgery. This can be done using commercially available cold packs, Ziploc freezer bags filled with ice and wrapped in a hand towel, or even the use of frozen vegetables wrapped in an insulating sleeve. After 72 hours you may apply moist warm compresses to the swollen areas in order to speed the resolution of the swelling. A heating pad on a low setting is a convenient alternative. The use of anticoagulant (blood thinning) medications may significantly increase the amount of swelling and bruising seen in some individuals.
4. **Mouth rinse:** No spitting, rinsing, or using a mouthwash is advised for the first 24 hours following surgery. During the first 24 hours following surgery, you may wipe out any unwanted fluid accumulation in your mouth using a tissue or piece of gauze. Forceful spitting or rinsing may cause increased bleeding. After 24 hours, warm saltwater rinses several times per day are advised. Continue frequent daily saltwater rinses until healing is complete. One quarter to one half a teaspoon of table salt in a 12 ounce glass of water makes a comfortable saltwater solution. Continue frequent daily saltwater rinses until healing is complete. A commercial mouth rinse should not be used after surgery during the first week. Prescription mouth rinses should be used according to the directions written on the prescription. These are often prescribed after implant or grafting procedures.
5. **Medications:** You may stop taking the pain medication at any time. However, please take all of your antibiotic pills if they have been prescribed for you. Please follow carefully the directions on the label of your prescription bottles. If you have been prescribed both pain medication and an antibiotic, it is best to avoid taking them at the same time. Please note that pain medications and some other medications may dull your reflexes and coordination. Please exercise due caution for at least 6 to 8 hours after taking them. Do not attempt to drive a car or perform activities requiring reflexes, judgment, or coordination. In general, these precautions do not apply to antibiotic medications such as amoxicillin, but always read and follow the precautions provided by your pharmacist.

Please note: If you have received sedative medications in our office in the form of IV medications or oral sedatives, understand that these medications may affect your judgment and coordination for up to 24 hours. During this time, it is mandatory to have personal adult supervision and assistance. Driving or operating dangerous machinery during this time period is strictly prohibited.

6. **Diet:** Drink or eat plenty of soft, bland foods. Soups, custards, Jello, soft eggs, yogurt, apple sauce, soupy mashed potatoes etc. should be consumed until a normal diet can be tolerated. Avoid spicy or rough foods. Avoid things that are hard or crunchy. A blender may be helpful in reducing favorite foods to a soft consistency. Dietary supplements (Ensure, Nutrament, Sustacal, Sustagen, etc.) are helpful if your diet is restricted for more lengthy periods of time. Avoid the use of a straw for the first 24 hours. If you have been sedated, it is generally helpful to avoid milk products for the first 24 hours.
7. **Nausea:** Nausea or vomiting may be troublesome after sedation procedures or taking pain medication. Over-the-counter medications such as Emetrol may relieve these problems. If you have been sedated, you may have been given a prescription for nausea and you should follow the pharmaceutical instructions for its use. If nausea persists, please refer to our emergency directions.
8. **Oral hygiene:** it is generally advisable to avoid brushing your teeth on the day of your surgery as this may stimulate bleeding. The next day however, one can continue to brush and floss the teeth in the usual manner. Please be particularly careful in the areas of the operative sites. Gentle brushing with a soft toothbrush is advised. Saline rinsing beginning 24 hours after surgery also assists in your oral hygiene care. This should be done after meals and at bedtime until the wounds have healed.
9. **Alcohol:** No alcoholic beverages should be consumed while taking any medications prescribed by this office.
10. **Smoking:** Avoidance of all tobacco products following oral surgery procedures is strongly advised. This is especially important for the first 3 to 4 days following surgery. The use of tobacco has been shown to impair healing, increase postoperative discomfort, and increase the chance of a dry socket.
11. **Sutures:** Sutures (stitches) are often placed during oral surgery procedures. They will usually dissolve away on their own and will not require removal. Occasionally, we may utilize sutures that require removal after 5 to 7 days. After a few days, sutures may become annoying and feel tight. This is normal and will be relieved when the stitches are either removed or dissolve naturally. The premature loss of one or more stitches before they are scheduled to be removed is generally no cause for alarm.
12. **Immediate dentures:** These are dentures (false teeth) that have been inserted into the mouth on the same day that the teeth have been removed. It is advisable to remove the dentures periodically after surgery in order to briefly rinse your mouth out and gently cleanse the dentures. Reinsert the dentures within 5 minutes after their removal as your gums may rapidly swell, preventing reinsertion of the dentures. It is important to see your regular dentist within 2 to 4 days after immediate dentures are placed. After the first 48 hours, your dentures should be removed several times per day for mouth rinses and denture cleaning. We may advise you to wear your dentures overnight for the first few days until you see your dentist for necessary adjustments. After that, it is generally recommended that you leave them out at night and soak them in a cleaning solution. They can then be rinsed and reinserted the following morning. Your dentist will give you definitive instructions on when and how he or she would like you to wear your dentures. It is important for you to return to your dentist for the necessary adjustments and follow-up. Getting used to new dentures, especially lower dentures, can be somewhat challenging and although most adjustments can be done by your dentist on the denture themselves, some surgical bone smoothing may occasionally be required to provide a more comfortable fit.
13. **Activities:** Avoid swimming for approximately 5 to 7 days following most surgical procedures. Heavy labor or physical activity (vigorous sports, working out, running, riding horses) should be curtailed or lessened depending on the severity of the procedure performed. Normal bathing and hair washing are permissible under most circumstances.

14. **Retainers:** Orthodontic retainers may be worn in the usual manner following most oral surgery procedures. If at all possible, begin wearing retainers within 48 hours of your surgery, even if it is only for an hour or so each day. If wearing retainers causes no discomfort, then begin to wear them as you always do.

15. **Specific instructions for sinus surgery:**

- a. Do not blow your nose for 10 days. For the subsequent 20 days, only gentle blowing of your nose is permitted. An over the counter nose drop preparation such as ½% Neosynephrine is helpful to prevent nasal congestion.
- b. Open your mouth to sneeze.
- c. Sleep or rest in a semi-upright (30° to 45°) position for 12 hours postoperatively.
- d. Do not be alarmed by slight nasal bleeding.
- e. Do not smoke for a minimum of 7 days.
- f. Do not rinse, spit, or suck through straws for the first week postoperatively. Gentle tooth brushing is permitted starting the day after surgery.

16. **Specific instructions for fracture surgery:**

- a. Keep your braces and wires clean by gently brushing and rinsing. You may use saltwater or diluted 3% hydrogen peroxide for best results. Good oral hygiene is very important to minimize the possibility of infection. Do not use a Water-Pik unless otherwise directed.
- b. Maintain a proper diet, even if your teeth are wired together, by eating and drinking several times per day rather than the customary 3 meals per day. During healing periods, calorie requirements should range from 2500 to 3000 calories per day unless otherwise instructed (diabetic or obesity diets are 2 common exceptions). Please refer to section 6 for diets.
- c. Do not attempt to cut your rubber bands/wires or to alter them in any way. This will surely compromise your surgical result and may lead to situations requiring corrective surgery. Respiratory or breathing distress is really the only situation in which the removal of wires/rubber bands is mandatory. This would be an exceedingly rare problem if a person is reasonably prudent in his or her choices of activities or foods.
- d. If you should lose or break several rubber bands, please contact the office within 48 hours for their replacement.

17. **Specific instructions for implant or bone graft surgery:**

- a. Please bite on gauze gently for 1 hour or until bleeding subsides. If active bleeding persists, refer to the bleeding instructions above for routine oral surgery.
- b. Do not rinse, spit, or suck through a straw for 24 hours following your implant or bone graft surgery. These actions induce bleeding.
- c. Please keep your tongue and fingers away from the surgical site. You may displace your sutures, stimulate bleeding, or open the wound. This could cause impaired healing, bone loss, or possible loss of the implant or grafting materials.
- d. Please do not attempt to remove your sutures (stitches). Most sutures dissolve in 5 to 14 days but some types may last 3-4 weeks before coming out.
- e. Keep your diet very soft and try to chew away from the operated area until all soreness is gone.
- f. Take all of your prescribed antibiotics but take your pain meds only as needed.
- g. If you have been prescribed a mouth rinse, you may begin using it the day following surgery. It is to be used twice daily for 2 weeks or until you use it up. Gentle application with a Q-tip is usually sufficient to keep the area clean until the wound is healed and brushing/flossing can resume. Saline rinses (1/2 teaspoon of salt in a glass of warm water) should be used after meals starting the day after surgery to assist in cleansing the surgical site.
- h. If you wear a denture or retainer over the surgical site, make sure that there is no pressure exerted on the site when biting. Relieving or cutting back the appliance slightly may be necessary to prevent pressure on the implant or graft. Leave your dentures out at night unless instructed otherwise.
- i. Swelling and/or bruising are very possible following this surgery. The use of ice packs to the face may help to reduce these and should be used for 48 hours following surgery. Using them 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off is a recommended pattern of application of the packs.
- j. Follow-up appointments are absolutely necessary to evaluate the status of your surgical site and recognize potential problems.

18. General Oral Surgery Information:

- a. The area of the surgery will often cause significant facial swelling. This usually peaks on or about the third postoperative day. The majority of the swelling is generally gone 7 to 10 days following the surgery.
- b. Facial bruising and discoloration may occur and persist for a week or more.
- c. Sore throats or earaches may develop during the postoperative period. If they persist or worsen after 5 days, please notify the office.
- d. Jaw stiffness is common. Several weeks may be required for your jaw to regain its usual freedom of movement and degree of opening. Chewing gum a week or so postoperatively may speed the return of normal function.
- e. You may experience some degree of numbness along the lip, chin, cheek, or border of the tongue on the operated side. This condition is usually temporary and almost always is self-correcting in several weeks to months. If such numbness is persistent, you should contact our office for an appointment.
- f. Your teeth may ache on the site operated; you may sometimes feel your "bite is off". Again this is usually a temporary, self-correcting situation.
- g. Your lips may become dry and cracked. Keep them covered with Vaseline, cream, or an ointment of your choice.
- h. A temperature elevation of up to 101° within the first 3 days following surgery may be expected. The use of Tylenol or ibuprofen would be recommended for this.
- i. Sharp bony edges or pieces of bone occasionally protrude through the gum near the operative site. This is usually noticed a week or more following surgery. It is important to keep the tongue and fingers away from this area until it has had a chance to heal. Please contact our office if this situation arises and persists.
- j. A bad odor or taste in your mouth is a fairly common complaint following surgery. This usually resolves as your healing progresses.
- k. It is important to maintain excellent oral hygiene measures (brushing, flossing, rinsing, etc.) in order to minimize the chances of infection. However, DO NOT use a WaterPik for at least 2 weeks following your surgery.
- l. Redness and pain near your IV site on your arm or hand may occasionally occur. Please notify our office if this condition does not improve. Taking aspirin, elevating the irritated site, and the application of moist heat, are all that is usually necessary to resolve this problem.
- m. Syringe irrigation: a syringe is sometimes given to patients 10 to 14 days following procedures to help keep lower wisdom teeth sockets clean. Please do not use the irrigating syringe until your doctor directs you to do so.
- n. It is mandatory to have personal adult supervision and assistance for a minimum of 24 hours following procedures for which medications were given for sedation by mouth or by injection. No activities requiring reflexes, judgment, or coordination should be performed for at least 24 hours following the administration of these drugs.

19. For Female Patients: Please be aware that the use of some medications such as antibiotics could interfere with the effectiveness of birth control pills and you could become pregnant. It may be prudent to discuss this with your physician and consider an alternative form of birth control while being treated.

20. Emergency instructions:

The above information has been provided to try to help you with any postoperative questions, concerns, or problems that you may have following your oral surgery. Please be sure that you have read all of the information provided in these instructions. The answer to your problem may be clearly stated here. Please feel free to contact us with any additional questions.

If you should have an emergency, please first call our office at (540) 774-5900 during regular office hours.

For emergencies after office hours and on weekends, please call Dr. Meador at (540) 774-7360 or our answering service at (434) 455-8243 and request that the doctor be contacted.