



POSTOPERATIVE CARE OF THE MOUTH AFTER ORAL SURGERY

The proper care following oral surgical procedures will hasten recovery and prevent complications.

- **ACTIVITY:** Bed rest the day of surgery is advised, particularly if intravenous medications were used. You should not drive or engage in any activity that requires hand and eye coordination that could result in injury for twenty-four (24) hours following sedation or general anesthesia.
- **BLEEDING:** Gauze has been placed over the extraction area and should be kept in place for about 1 hour after the surgery. Some bleeding is normal and should be expected. You will normally experience a slight oozing of blood, which may color the saliva pink or red for 24-36 hours. If persistent bleeding occurs, replace gauze exactly over the bleeding area, (a moistened tea bag also works well) and bite down firmly for 30 minutes. Gauze must be removed when you go to sleep, and also to take medications and liquids/foods. Repeat if necessary and if active brisk bleeding continues, call our office.
- **PAIN:** If you have been prescribed a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medicine for swelling and postoperative pain (**Ibuprofen**) you should take this medication before local anesthesia (numbness) wears off (usually 2-4 hours after surgery), but only after you have had something to eat. Some local anesthesia may take up to 6 to 8 hours. **Ibuprofen** is the **first line** medication to be taken. Narcotic pain medications should be taken in the event of acute pain only and at regularly prescribed times if you are having increasing amounts of pain; usually at four (4) to six (6) hour intervals. We recommend that you alternate the Ibuprofen and narcotic during acute pain decreasing the interval of time any-one medication that is taken. We prefer you take your ibuprofen for 5 to 7 days continuously unless otherwise directed and it may be the only medication you need after your surgery. In the event ibuprofen is contraindicated and cannot be taken, we ask that you take acetaminophen (Tylenol) as the substitute. Be careful not to exceed 3000mg of acetaminophen in a 24hr period as most narcotics have acetaminophen in each pill.
- **HYGIENE:** Tooth brushing should be started 24 hours after surgery. This is especially important after meals.
- **SMOKING:** AVOID COMPLETELY for at least 1 week.
- **SWELLING:** It will reach its peak in 2-3 days and then decrease over time. To minimize this, apply ice packs for the first 24 to 48 hours only, 30 minutes on and 30 minutes off. Alternate sides if indicated. Heat is advisable after 48 hours.
- **RESTRICTED RANGE OF MOTION:** Swelling after surgery often causes muscular stiffness of the jaw and may create lingering muscular pain and limit your opening for a short period of time. To relieve this discomfort, we recommend heat after 48 hrs. of surgery, jaw stretching motions by holding open and closed, and ibuprofen.
- **DIET:** Liquids and soft diet are advisable during the first twenty-four (24) hours following surgery (soup, eggs, yogurt, pasta, ice cream, etc.). Do not drink through a straw for 5-7 days. Avoid crunchy foods for 7 days. Do not consume alcohol.

- **STITCHES:** Stitches are not always used, however if stitches were placed, they typically dissolve/fall out on their own within 5-10 days. There is no need to replace these sutures should they come out even on the first day.
- **RINSING:** Warm saltwater rinses can be started 24 hours after your surgery. Do not rinse vigorously or spit because you can disturb a blood clot. An irrigating syringe is usually supplied for wisdom tooth extractions. If you were given a plastic syringe, begin to irrigate only the lower holes four (4) days after surgery to remove food and debris. This should be done if the holes are open which could be up to a couple of weeks after surgery.
- **ANTIBIOTICS:** If given antibiotics, be sure you take the antibiotic as directed until all the medication is complete (usually 7-10 days).
- **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** Due to the recent state laws and national opioid epidemics, we prescribe less than a five (5) day supply of a narcotic according to state law. Our national oral surgery organization has set guidelines for opioid prescriptions. Ibuprofen, if tolerated, is the first-line pain management medication to be taken and then only a narcotic if not relieved with ibuprofen or Tylenol. We do not prescribe long-acting narcotics. If you are interested, you are welcome to see our professional guidelines on opiate prescribing regulations we have on file at the office.

A postoperative appointment is usually made approximately one (1) week following surgery. Please call the office (**864-603-2464**) to set up this appointment if it has not already been set up. If any unusual symptoms occur, please call the office. Should you need to reach Dr. Cherry directly in the event of an emergency only, please call 864-915-5479.

Brian R. Cherry, DMD *Board Certified Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon*