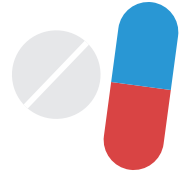


# Care Guide: Tooth Extraction

Dental extractions require proper post-operative care to ensure appropriate healing. Adherence to the following instructions will help minimize pain and swelling and prevent complications such as infections and “dry sockets.”

## Pain

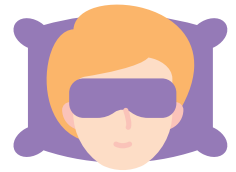
Post-operative discomfort is expected after surgery and may often be controlled with over-the-counter analgesics. For mild to moderate pain, Ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) may be taken at a dose of 600 mg every six hours. In addition, Acetaminophen (Tylenol) may also be taken concurrently at a dose of 325–650 mg every six hours as needed for pain. Do not take any of the above medications if you have an allergy to them, or if you have been instructed by your physician not to take them.



For more severe pain, you may be prescribed a narcotic pain medication. If needed, take this medication as directed. Narcotic pain medications should be taken with food, as they may make you nauseous if taken on an empty stomach. When taking a narcotic, refrain from driving or operating machinery, as this medication will affect your judgment and reaction time. If you continue to have discomfort that persists for more than one week, please inform your surgeon.

## Swelling

Swelling will reach its peak point approximately 48 hours after your surgery, and then begin to slowly decrease over the next week. Swelling may be reduced by applying ice packs to the affected regions for 20 minutes on and then 20 minutes off during the first 48 hours. Keeping your head elevated on an extra pillow when you sleep or lie down can also help to minimize swelling. If swelling increases more than three days after surgery, please call the office.



## Bleeding

A certain amount of bleeding is to be expected after surgery. Slight bleeding, oozing, or redness in the saliva is not uncommon for the first 48 hours. Do not aggressively rinse, spit, or gargle your first day after surgery, as this may disrupt the blood clot forming and initiate bleeding. Excessive bleeding may be controlled by first rinsing or wiping any old clots from your mouth, and then placing a moistened, folded gauze pad directly over the area and biting firmly for thirty to sixty minutes. Repeat if necessary. Do not sleep with gauze in your mouth. If bleeding continues, bite on a moistened tea bag for thirty minutes. If bleeding does not subside, please call for further instructions.

## Bruising

Some patients may experience bruising on the cheeks and/or neck. This may occur several days after surgery and may take one to two weeks to disappear. People who bruise easily or who take blood thinners are more likely to bruise.

## Oral Hygiene

Good oral hygiene is essential for the healing process and to help prevent infections. **Do not aggressively rinse, spit, gargle or brush the first day and night.** Resume brushing your teeth the day after surgery, taking care to be gentle as you get closer to the surgical sites. You should begin gently rinsing with salt water 24 hours after your surgery. A diluted salt water mouth rinse may be made by mixing ½ teaspoon of salt in one cup of warm water.



## Smoking

Please refrain from smoking or using tobacco products for at least one week after surgery. Smoking interferes with healing and can result in dry sockets, prolonged pain, and infections.



## Diet

Immediately following your surgery, begin with soft, cool foods. Be sure to drink plenty of fluids. Do not use straws, as they may lead to the formation of dry sockets. You may slowly advance to a normal diet when comfortable to do so. Avoid hot foods and beverages while numb.

## Activity & Sleeping

When resting or sleeping, do so in a reclined position with your head slightly elevated on an extra pillow. Avoid prolonged standing, vigorous activity or strenuous heavy lifting for three to five days after surgery.

## Wound Appearance

Extraction sockets may appear as a white, gray, or a yellowish patch, or simply as an opening in the gums. The gum tissue along the adjacent teeth may appear “loose” for up to several weeks after surgery. This is normal and will heal on its own.

## Stitches

Dissolvable stitches may sometimes be placed at your extraction site. Not all extractions require stitches. If stitches were placed, they will typically fall out on their own or dissolve in four to seven days. Sometimes, these stitches may begin to fall out as early as the same day of surgery. If this occurs, this is all right and the site will continue to heal without them. Please try not to disturb these stitches as much as possible until they fully dissolve.

## Dry Sockets

A dry socket occurs when the healing blood clot is prematurely dislodged from the socket or disintegrates. It is not an infection. If this occurs, it usually occurs four to six days after surgery or later. A dry socket is characterized by severe pain that seems to be worsening rather than improving after post-operative day four. Risk of a dry socket can be minimized by avoiding smoking, straws, spitting, or rinsing too vigorously. If a dry socket occurs, it will still heal well on its own, but you may benefit from placement of a medicated dressing in the socket to help alleviate the pain. Contact the office to arrange for this if needed.



## Follow-up

Check-ups are normally done at 8:00 AM or 1:00 PM Monday–Friday. If you require unexpected follow-up during normal business hours, please contact our office. We are available at our West Madison office on Saturday mornings for a short time from 8:00 AM to 9:00 AM. If you need to be seen on a Saturday morning, call the West office at 8:00 AM on Saturday. If you are having an emergency after-hours or on weekends, please contact our oral surgeon on call at (608) 259-2864. Narcotic prescription refills may only be addressed during normal office hours.