Post-operative care after Dental/Oral Surgery

Performed at: Swedish Community Specialty Clinic (SCSC)
After-hours contact #: 206-386-6000

Hospital Operator—ask for the Dentist on call

General Guidelines

- Do not disturb your wound. Doing so may cause irritation, infection, and/or bleeding.
- Do not smoke. If you must smoke, try to refrain as much as possible. (This is an excellent time to quit!)

Bleeding

- Rest and keep your head elevated.
- Oozing of blood from the wound is normal. Consider sleeping on a towel or old pillow in case there is any staining.
- If you have worrisome bleeding, fold or roll a gauze pad and place it TIGHTLY on your surgical site. Be sure it pushes down on the gums. Press or bite down hard on the gauze and keep firm pressure for at least 60 minutes. If the gauze becomes soaked, DO NOT remove it, but place another gauze over it and call the pager number above.
- It is normal for the clot to reform in 2-3 days; bleeding may reoccur. Apply new gauze and apply firm pressure for 60 minutes.

Pain and Pain Medicines

- Pain after dental or oral surgery is normal.
- Pain medicines help lower and control your pain, but they usually do not completely eliminate your pain. Expect your pain to go from intolerable (7-8 out of 10) down to tolerable (2-3 out of 10). Do not expect zero pain.
- Take your pain medicines exactly as prescribed and with food. Do not take more pain medicine or add other remedies.
- If you have not been given a prescription for pain medicines, an over-the-counter pain medicine should be enough.
- If you find that your pain control is not adequate, call hospital operator number above for the dentist on-call.
- Prescribed pain medication can be alternated with Ibuprofen (up to 4 times per day), unless you are unable to take Ibuprofen per MD. Do not exceed 600 mg of Ibuprofen at one time or 3200 mg in a 24 hour period.
  - For example, take prescribed pain medication, wait 3 hours, take Ibuprofen, wait 3 hours, take prescribed pain medication, and repeat. This is usually only needed for the first 2-3 days after procedure.

Nausea or Vomiting

- When you swallow blood, it can cause you to feel nauseated and/or vomit.
- Pain medicines can also cause stomach upset. Taking pain medicines with food often helps.
- If you cannot hold down any food or water, call the pager number above. We do not want you to become dehydrated.

Other Medicines

- Fill prescriptions as soon as possible and then take them exactly as told.
- Contact the pager number above if you have any side effects that cause concern.
Swelling
- Swelling after dental or oral surgery is normal. It may last 4 to 7 days.
- To minimize swelling, apply an ice pack to your face over the area of your surgery as soon as possible after surgery. Use the ice pack for 20 minutes on then 20 minutes off. Repeat this cycle as needed for the first 6 to 8 hours.
- If the swelling is excessive, call hospital operator number above for the dentist on-call.

Post-operative Appointment
- Unless otherwise specified your treatment has been completed and you will not need to be seen again at this clinic.
- If you desire a post-operative appointment to evaluate your healing please contact the clinic at (206) 860-6656. Please contact the clinic a minimum of 24 hours in advance to schedule this appointment.

Bruising
- Sometimes bruises appear after surgery no matter how gentle the procedure. They can be large and impressive.
- If you get bruises, they may take days to weeks to go away. Sometimes bruises occur first near your surgical site and then move down into your neck and then chest by gravity. Bruises change colors from black/blue to yellow/green as they resolve. This is all normal.

Sutures (also called stitches)
- If used, your sutures will dissolve and fall out in the next several days to weeks.

Signs of Infection
- All wounds are at risk of becoming infected. Existing infections can get worse.
- If you are prescribed an antibiotic, be sure to take it as told—even if it means getting up during the night to stay on schedule. Be sure to take the entire prescription, even if you start feeling better. The bacteria that survive the longest during antibiotic use are the hardest to control if they are allowed to re-grow.
- Contact hospital operator on the front of this sheet for the dentist on-call right away if you have any of these symptoms:
  - Fever, over 101° F or 38.5° C.
  - Swelling, especially 2 to 4 days after surgery that is warm to the touch and somewhat hard instead of puffy.
  - Swelling in your throat/neck, or on your face that causes an eye to start to close.
  - You do not feel well (run down, tired, or sick).

Diet and Fluids
- Drink plenty of fluids. Try fruit juices, milk shakes, eggnog, water, or a liquid supplement like Ensure.
- Eat soups or foods that can be chewed easily such as fish, cottage cheese, pasta, and eggs.
- You may not feel like eating as much as usual, but it is important to eat well to promote quality healing.

Oral Hygiene
- Clean your mouth well after eating and drinking. Salt water rinses are not proven to be effective, but are better than nothing. (¼ teaspoon salt to 8 ounces of warm water).
- Start brushing your teeth gently and flossing as soon as you are able. Generally this is the day after surgery.
- Toothpaste may sting; it is okay to not use toothpaste for a few days. Instead, dip your toothbrush in warm water and clean your teeth and gums carefully.
- Gently clean the surgical site, being careful not to disturb your wound or the sutures.

Other Instructions from Your Doctor: