**Post-op Instructions After Tooth Removal**

Post-operative care is important. Unnecessary pain and the complications of infection and swelling can be minimized if the instructions are followed. Remember the ‘three guarantees’ we discussed.

**Immediately Following Surgery**

* Keep the gauze firmly placed over the extraction site(s) for ~30 minutes. After this time, the gauze should be removed and replaced only if active bleeding is present.
* Hydrate and get some nutrition in your system. Hold off on chewing while the lower jaw is still numb.
* Take your medications as soon as you have eaten something.
* Place ice packs for 20 minutes.
* Restrict your activities the day of surgery and resume normal activity when you feel comfortable which may be few days.

**Bleeding**

Light bleeding or oozing is to be expected for a day or two after surgery. If active bleeding continues, remove any superficial blood by gently brushing the site, thoroughly rinsing the mouth with cold water, followed with a folded piece of clean gauze placed over the site and apply pressure by biting. Maintain pressure for 30 minutes with the head elevated. You can try a moist tea bag in place of the gauze. Patients may experience bruising on the face and neck, especially if taking blood thinners. If there are any bleeding/bruising concerns, please call our office. Do not sleep with gauze in your mouth.

**Swelling**

Swelling is normal may become noticeable the day following surgery, reaching its peak ~3 days after surgery. Swelling may be minimized by the immediate use of ice packs for 20 minutes on and off for 36 hours. After 36 hours, moist heat may be used. If the jaw muscles are stiff and sore limiting opening, stretch those muscles by holding your mouth open for 20 seconds, then massage those muscles in your cheeks. Swelling may not be the same on both sides. If difficulty with swallowing occurs, please contact our office.

**Pain**

As the numbing medicine wears off, discomfort will set in. It usually will increase over the first three days as swelling increases. Anti-inflammatories (if tolerable) and ice packs minimize swelling which minimizes pain. Generally, we recommend taking an anti-inflammatory, ibuprofen at the same time as taking Tylenol, if not tolerated alternative medications will be discussed. You will hear us use a term **“4-5-6”** which is ibuprofen 400mg taken with Tylenol 500mg every 6 hours. An alternative pain medication will be prescribed as a backup. If it is Tylenol 3, this would be taken with the ibuprofen in place of the plain 500mg Tylenol. Keep a log of when you take medications and the dosage, you want to stay below the maximum recommended dose of 3200mg of ibuprofen and 3000mg of Tylenol in a 24-hour period. Pain should be decreasing after the 4th day, if not contact us. Discomfort is usually not the same on both sides, which is OK. Smoking will cause increased pain and increased risk of dry socket.

**Diet**

Remove the gauze before you eat and drink, replace afterwards only if needed. As mentioned, do not chew food until the numbness has worn off so you do not bite your tongue, cheek, or lip. Most people will select soft foods that require minimal chewing effort. Stay hydrated, at least six 8oz glasses of water should be taken daily. You will feel better, have more strength, less discomfort and heal faster if you continue to hydrate and nourish.

**Keep the mouth clean**

You can brush your teeth and gently rinse the day of surgery. Be cautious around the surgical sites but do your best to keep your mouth clean. The day after surgery you should begin rinsing at least 3-4 times a day, usually after eating. Prepare and use a cup of warm water mixed with a half teaspoon of salt. Do not use commercial oral rinses unless told to do so as these may be harsh on healing surgical sites. Warm salt water is ideal but even plain water is better than nothing. Gravity will usually drain the upper extraction sites, but food will find its way into the lower extraction sites so keep up with the hygiene (brushing and rinsing) after each meal even if it is sore, the alternative is worse.

**Antibiotics**

Not everyone needs them. If you were written for an antibiotic, take them as prescribed. Discontinue antibiotic use in the event of a rash or other unfavorable reaction and contact our office.

**Nausea and Vomiting**

Nausea may come from sedation medications or taking medication on an empty stomach. If nausea is a problem, drink small sips of clear liquids or decarbonated beverages such as flat ginger ale. If medications seem to be the cause try changing to an alternative such as Advil, Aleve, or Tylenol. Dehydration is a common cause for nausea, so stay hydrated.

**Other Concerns**

* If numbness of the lip, chin, or tongue occurs there is no cause for alarm. This is most likely due to the close relationship between your lower teeth and the nerve in the lower jaw. As discussed in the consultation before surgery, this is usually temporary in nature. Call our office if you notice any altered sensations after the first week of surgery.
* Slight elevation of temperature immediately following surgery is common. Tylenol or ibuprofen (Advil) will help reduce this.
* Be careful moving from a reclined or seated position to standing. Dehydration or medications can make you lightheaded.
* You may feel new bumps or spots in the mouth. This is generally normal structures being discovered. These areas usually will heal and remodel with time. If they persist and troublesome, please contact the office.
* The corners of your mouth may be stretched and may dry out and crack. Keep areas moist with an ointment such as Vaseline or any lip balm.
* Sore throat is not uncommon. This usually will subside in 2-3 days as swelling decreases.

**Finally**

* Sutures will dissolve on their own usually between the 3rd and 7th post-operative day, sometimes sooner. If they stay past 2 weeks, contact us.
* There will be a hole where the tooth was removed. The hole will gradually fill in over the next month with new tissue. In the meantime, the area should be kept clean especially after meals with saltwater rinses and a toothbrush.
* Dry socket may occur 3-10 days following surgery when the blood clot is lost then the extraction site becomes locally infected. Symptoms of intense pain at the surgical site and radiating to the ear. Rare for our patients but possible.
* More commonly, gravity causes food debris to settle into the lower extraction site causing increased pain. This is usually misinterpreted as a dry socket. If you are unable to rinse the site well enough contact us.
* If you have questions not found in here or on our website, contact us at the clinic during regular hours and on my cell phone after hours (see below). Thank you for allowing us to care for you. You will heal, hang in there!

Wishing you a swift recovery,

James D. Lussier

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