

POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS



BLEEDING

- Bleeding after surgery can be managed by applying gentle biting pressure with sterile gauze directly to the surgical site.
- You will find extra gauze in the post-operative bag but additional gauze can be purchased from a pharmacy.
- Change the gauze every 30 to 40 minutes, or when it is saturated.
- Do not eat, drink, or sleep with the gauze in your mouth as it could cause choking.
- A wet black tea bag can be used instead of gauze.
- Some light bleeding may occur over the next few days, especially after eating or brushing your teeth.
- If bleeding is heavy and persistent apply firm pressure to the surgical site for 1 hour.

Notify your surgeon if the bleeding is heavy, persistent, and not improving after 1 hour of firm pressure. Call 911 or go to the closest emergency room if heavy bleeding occurs after business hours or is accompanied by dizziness, fainting, or confusion.

PAIN

- It is normal to have some pain after surgery. The level of pain will vary depending on the type of surgery you had but should improve by the end of the first week.
- Some patients experience pain for up to two weeks, but please notify your surgeon if you feel like your pain is not improving or is accompanied by symptoms of infection (see infection section).
- You may not get a prescription for pain medicine after surgery because studies have shown that alternating between ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) and acetaminophen (Tylenol) after surgery provides better pain control than the opioid-based medications.
- Some health conditions and medications make it unsafe to take ibuprofen or acetaminophen, so speak with your surgeon, pharmacist, or primary care doctor about which pain medications are safe for you.
- Dosing of medications is typically weight-based, so follow the manufacturer's guidelines or what is written on your prescription.
- A condition called "dry socket" may occur about 4-7 days after dental extractions. Typical symptoms of dry socket include:
 - Increasing pain that doesn't respond to pain medication
 - Waking up from pain
 - Foul odor, and a bad taste.

Dry socket always goes away on its own. However, there is medication that can be placed into the extraction socket to help ease the pain. Please call the office for a follow-up visit if you think you are developing dry socket.

SWELLING

- Some swelling is to be expected after surgery.
- Swelling may worsen over the first 2-3 days after surgery before it starts to improve.
- Use cold packs externally over the surgical area off and on throughout the first 48 hours after surgery to minimize swelling.

Notify your surgeon if the swelling is accompanied by signs of infection, came on very suddenly, or is not improving as expected. Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room if the swelling is causing you difficulty with swallowing or breathing.

NAUSEA

- Nausea and vomiting may be caused by medications, anesthesia, or swallowing blood. If vomiting occurs, take small sips of clear liquids such as water, apple juice, Gatorade, etc to maintain hydration.
- To prevent nausea, eat a small, light snack before taking any medications, unless the instructions say otherwise.
- Spreading out your pain medications and antibiotics rather than taking multiple medications at the same time can also reduce nausea.

Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room if the vomiting is persistent or accompanied by signs of dehydration such as lethargy, confusion, severe headache, or loss of consciousness.

INFECTION

- Infections are possible after surgery and need to be managed carefully. Notify your surgeon if you experience any of the following:
 - fever greater than 101° F
 - swelling that feels hard or rigid
 - swelling that goes away and then comes back again
 - swelling that is spreading down your neck, throat, or around your eye
 - thick yellow discharge
 - pain that seems disproportionate to your surgery
 - hot redness of the skin
 - lethargy, confusion, severe headache, or loss of consciousness

SUTURES

- There are two types of sutures that we use: those that dissolve and fall out on their own, and those that need to be removed by the surgeon.
- The dissolvable sutures typically last about a week, but they may come out a little sooner or last a little longer.
- If your sutures need to be removed by the surgeon, a follow-up appointment will be scheduled at the time of your procedure.
- If you aren't sure which type of suture you have (if any), please call the office.
- Do not pull at or cut your sutures as this could compromise the surgical site.

EATING AND DRINKING

- Staying hydrated is important for recovery from anesthesia and also from surgery. Drink plenty of water and clear liquids.
- Your nutrition is also important for wound healing. Even though you might not feel like eating much, try to eat several small meals or snacks throughout the day, especially when taking pain medicine and/or antibiotics.
- For about one week after surgery, you should eat foods that are soft and bland. Examples include, but are not limited to, apple sauce, yogurt, oatmeal, mashed potatoes, soup, smoothies, protein shakes, ice cream, pudding etc.
- You can also eat pasta, rice, fish, and cooked vegetables.
- Avoid hard, crunchy, and abrasive foods such as tortilla chips, nuts, hard breads, etc.
- Foods that are hot (both temperature and spice) should also be avoided as they might cause pain at the surgical site.
- Chewy foods such as bagels, beef jerky, licorice, etc. might be uncomfortable to eat while your jaw and muscles are sore and should be avoided until pain and swelling is minimal.
- Consider supplementing your diet with meal replacement drinks such as Ensure.

ORAL HYGIENE

- It is important to keep your mouth clean after surgery to prevent infections, but you must also be careful to not disrupt the blood clot and/or bone graft if one was performed.
- Starting the day after surgery, and continuing for at least the first week, rinse gently with warm salt water after eating. Avoid vigorous swishing or spitting.
- Brush your teeth as normal, but do not brush directly on the surgical site.
- Do not use a Water-Pik directly on the surgical site until it has fully healed.
- Avoid using mouthwash that contains alcohol as it can irritate the surgical site and cause additional pain.
- If you have a dental implant with a healing abutment that protrudes through the gums, you can clean the abutment with a Q-tip or gently with your toothbrush.

ALCOHOL

- Avoid alcohol if you are taking prescription pain medicine after surgery.
- Avoid alcohol if your surgeon prescribed a muscle relaxant or anti-anxiety medication.
- Alcohol can decrease the effectiveness of some antibiotics and may prolong wound healing.
- One antibiotic in particular, metronidazole (Flagyl), can cause serious nausea and vomiting if alcohol is consumed while it is in your system. **DO NOT** drink alcohol if taking Flagyl.

SMOKING

- Smoking of any substance is discouraged before or after surgery.
- Choosing to smoke may slow healing and cause dry socket.

EXERCISE

- We recommend avoiding high intensity sports and limiting low impact activities for at least a week after surgery.
- Lifting weights, running, and other high intensity sports can increase your heart rate and blood pressure, potentially causing more pain, swelling, and bleeding.
- Low impact activities such as walking and yoga are fine to do the first week of surgery as long as you feel well enough. If you practice yoga, avoid poses where your head is below your heart until your wounds are completely healed.
- Avoid swimming for at least 2 weeks to prevent dirty water from getting into your open wounds.
- If pain or swelling increases after physical activity, rest and avoid further physical activity until the pain and swelling has decreased.

BONE GRAFTS

- If your procedure included a bone graft you may notice small, hard granules that look and feel like sand emerge from the site after surgery. This is common and not usually cause for alarm if the number of granules is small. Notify your surgeon if a large clump of graft material comes out or if you are concerned the graft is getting infected (see section on infection.)
- Even after the site has fully healed, you might notice additional bone granules emerging through the surface of the gums. These can often be cleaned off with a Q-tip but notify your surgeon if the granules are sharp, bothersome, and not able to be wiped away.

BLOOD THINNERS

- If you normally take a blood thinner but stopped it prior to surgery, you may resume taking the medication 24 hours after surgery unless the surgical site is still actively bleeding and/or your prescribing doctor has recommended something different.
- If you have persistent bleeding, please consult your surgeon before resuming the blood thinner.
- Some patients who are taking blood thinners such as Warfarin (Coumadin) will have a prescribed “bridge” that should be determined before surgery. Follow the instructions set out by your medical provider as to when you should stop the bridge and resume your normal medication schedule.

CPAP MACHINES

- In most cases it is safe to use your CPAP machine after surgery.
- If you were told that you had a sinus perforation after a dental extraction or had surgery that involved your sinus (such as a “sinus lift”), talk to your surgeon about the use of your CPAP machine.