

What to Expect After a Tooth Extraction

Do not disturb the area: For the next few days, and especially the first 24 hours, it is very important to allow your body to form a good clot and start the natural healing process. Swishing, sucking through a straw and smoking can all cause the area to keep the open wound exposed. Keep anything sharp from entering the wound (crunchy food, toothpicks, eating utensils). Be sure to chew on the opposite side for 24 hours.

Bleeding: When you leave the office, you might be biting on a gauze pad to control bleeding. Keep light pressure on this gauze for at least 30 minutes. Don't change it during this time; it needs to remain untouched while a clot forms in the wound. After 30 minutes you may remove it. You may bite on another gauze or tea bag for another 30 minutes if you feel it is still bleeding. Small amounts of blood in the saliva can make your saliva appear quite red. This is normal and may be noticed for the rest of the day after the procedure.

Smoking: Smoking should be stopped after surgery. Healing and success of the surgery will be reduced by the chemicals in the cigarette. The suction created when inhaling cigarettes can remove the healthy clot your body created. Smokers are at a higher risk of developing a painful dry socket.

Pain: It is normal to feel uncomfortable after surgery. The worst pain usually happens between the first 48 and 72 hours. To lower your pain level, take Tylenol (Acetaminophen), Advil, or similar non-Aspirin pain reliever every 4 hours until bedtime to keep comfortable. Combination of one Acetaminophen (500mg) and one Ibuprofen (200mg) every 4-6 hours works great as long as you don't go over the daily limit (listed on the bottle). *Check for allergies.* Take pain medication before the anesthesia wears off.

If prescription pain medication is prescribed, take it as instructed on the label. Don't take more than the dose on the label. Taking the medication with food or milk will help lower upset stomach. Avoid driving or operating heavy machinery when taking pain prescriptions. Do not drink alcohol while taking prescription pain medications.

Nausea: This is most often caused by taking the pain medications on an empty stomach. Reduce nausea by eating soft food first, and then taking the pill with a large glass of water.

Swelling: Applying an ice bag to the area that has been operated on will reduce swelling. Apply for 15 minutes, then remove for 15 minutes. Continue this for the rest of the day.

Numbness: The local anesthetic will cause you to be numb for several hours after you leave the office. Be very careful not to bite, chew, pinch, or scratch the numb area. Sometime the extraction causes numbness or tingling for six weeks or longer after the procedure.

Brushing: Do not brush your teeth for the first 8 hours after surgery. After 8 hours have passed, you may brush your teeth gently, but avoid the area of surgery for 3 days.

Rinsing: Avoid all rinsing or swishing for 24 hours after extraction. Rinsing can disturb the formation of a healing blood clot which is very important for proper healing. This could cause bleeding and risk of a dry socket. After 24 hours you may begin gentle rinsing with a saltwater solution (1/2 teaspoon of salt+ 8 ounces of salt water). Please avoid using commercial mouth rinses.

Diet: Eat soft foods for the first two days. Keep a good, balanced diet. Return to normal regular meals as soon as you are able to after the first two days. Drink plenty of water. Avoid drinking alcohol for 48 hours.

Activity: After leaving the office, rest and avoid difficult activities for the rest of the day. Keeping blood pressure lower will help the wound heal.

Antibiotics: If you were given an antibiotic prescription, take all of them as directed until they are gone. *Women: Some antibiotics can reduce the effectiveness of birth control pills. Use another birth control method for two months.*

Sinus: If your sinus was involved in the procedure, you should avoid blowing your nose or playing a wind musical instrument for one week. Use of decongestant medications might be recommended.