

**DR. OWEN SYMINGTON**  
ORAL AND MAXILLOFACIAL SURGEON  
SUITE 1014 790 BAY STREET  
TORONTO ONTARIO  
M5G 1N8  
(416) 967-9020

## **Post Operative Instructions**

### **Swelling, Bruising and Discomfort**

Swelling, bruising and discomfort may occur after surgery and are completely normal. Swelling should reach a maximum 2 to 3 days after surgery. Please use ice packs for swelling (a bag of frozen vegetables wrapped in a cloth is ideal). Apply the ice packs at intervals of 15 minutes on and 15 minutes off for the first 12 to 24 hours. You may use ice for comfort after the first 24 hours. Never use heat on your face. It is normal for bruising to appear in the chin and neck areas. Improvement of these symptoms should start on the fourth day.

### **Limited Mouth Opening**

Following surgery your jaw will be stiff and you may experience pain when opening your mouth. This is a normal protective mechanism and is due to the accumulation of fluid in the jaw muscles. This stiffness will reach a maximum about 2-3 days after your surgery and will gradually decline over the following week.

### **Temperature**

A temperature increase to 102°F or 39°C is common for 1 or 2 days after surgery. If your temperature goes higher than this, please call our office.

### **Stitches**

Stitches may be placed in the area of surgery to minimize post-operative bleeding and to help healing. These stitches dissolve on their own within 3 to 7 days. The stitch covered by skin will dissolve, the knots above the skin will fall away, if you swallow them do not worry. Sometimes they become dislodged, but this is no cause for alarm. Just remove the suture from your mouth and discard it. Most stitches will dissolve over 4 to 5 days but if the removal of sutures is required no anaesthesia or needles are needed. It takes only a minute or so, and there is no discomfort associated with this procedure.

### **Bleeding**

A small amount of redness mixed with saliva is normal after surgery. This should not cause concern. Do not spit for the first 24 hours, as spitting aggravates bleeding. Smoking and using a drinking straw must be avoided as they also promote bleeding.

If you have a flow of blood or if bleeding persists, look in the mirror to determine the source of the bleeding, then place a gauze pad folded in four over the bleeding. Apply pressure by biting on the gauze, at the same time apply pressure to the outside of the face with the palm of your hand for 30 minutes.

Repeat if necessary. If there is still a flow of blood notify our office. Exercise and strenuous activity should be avoided as this may promote bleeding.

## **Oral Hygiene**

In general, the cleaner you keep the extraction site (the hole in the bone where the tooth has been removed, also referred to as the tooth's socket) the quicker it will heal. Do not rinse your mouth for the first 24 hours as this can disturb the healing process. Beginning 24 hours after your tooth extraction, you can gently rinse the socket with warm salt water (1/2 teaspoon of salt in a cup of warm water) after meals and before bed. Do not use commercial mouth rinses for the first 2 days. They may irritate the extraction site. You can brush your teeth when comfortable to do so but do not go in the area of the extractions. Keep your lips well lubricated with ointment.

## **Diet**

Avoid hot drinks until local anaesthesia has worn off. Your jaw may be stiff or your throat sore, so it may be difficult to eat following your surgery. You should stick to soft foods such as pasta, soups, scrambled eggs, puddings and Jell-O. You must also consume plenty of fluids 8 to 10 oz per hour. A regular diet can be resumed after 4-5 days or when it can be comfortably managed.

## **Deep Sedation Anaesthesia**

All patients receiving sedation must have a responsible adult to accompany them home after surgery.

After anaesthesia it is normal to be drowsy and poorly coordinated for several hours. Stay home and relax until this wears off. Do not drive or operate heavy machinery or consume alcohol for at least 24 hours.

## **Nausea**

Nausea may occur after anaesthesia or from some medications. If this happens, Gravol may be purchased without a prescription and follow the directions on the package.

## **Smoking**

Do not smoke for at least 4 days following your surgery. Smoking can lead to increased pain, dry socket and delayed healing.

## **Medications**

Usually you will be given Advil and/or Tylenol #3 for the control of your postoperative pain. Take your medication as directed on the bottle. Advil (400-600mg) may be taken every 6-8 hours. Tylenol # 3 (1 -2 tablets) may be taken every 3-4 hours. Your pain medication may cause dizziness and/or drowsiness. If you are taking Tylenol # 3 **do not drive**.

Sometimes constipation might develop while taking codeine. In this case taking milk of magnesia may help.

If an antibiotic is required you will be given a prescription for it and you must complete the whole prescription. Female patients taking birth control pills and antibiotics should know that the combination of these two drugs may cause the birth control pills to become ineffective. If a rash, severe stomach cramps, or diarrhea occurs, stop taking medication and call our office.

# Common Complications

## Dry sockets

One of the more common complications people experience after a tooth extraction is that of developing a "dry socket." It is thought that dry sockets occur when either a blood clot has failed to form in the tooth socket (the hole left after extracting the tooth), or else the blood clot that did form has been dislodged. Since the formation of a blood clot is an important part of the healing process, the normal healing of the extraction site is interrupted.

Dry sockets are most frequently associated with difficult tooth extractions or extractions that have been traumatic in nature. An extraction that has involved the removal of bone from around a tooth in order for the dentist to access it, which is often the case when lower impacted wisdom teeth are removed, would be considered to be more traumatic in nature than an extraction where this step was not required.

People who follow the aftercare instructions will reduce their chances of developing a dry socket. Dry sockets are found to occur more often with women (even more so with those taking oral contraceptives), people over the age of 30, and especially smokers.

Typically dry sockets manifest themselves as a dull throbbing pain, which does not appear until three or four days after the tooth extraction. The pain can be moderate to severe in intensity and often seems to radiate from the area of the extraction site to the ear. Dry sockets typically create a foul odor or bad taste. Dry sockets need to be treated to relieve the pain. There is no way to predict who will develop a dry socket, and if one occurs after your extraction we will assist you in treating the condition.

In most cases a medicated dressing is placed into a dry socket as a treatment. This will help to soothe and moderate the pain. The dressing is usually removed and replaced every 2-3 days until the dry socket's symptoms subside, which can, in some cases, take several days.

## Bone Sequestra / Fragments

Sometimes small fragments of dead bone will come to the surface of an extraction site as the patient's body ejects them during the healing process. This is more likely to occur in those cases where the tooth extraction has been relatively difficult or traumatic. You may be able to remove the smallest of these splinters of bone on your own, or you may find that you require assistance in removing them.

## Completion Of The Healing Process

Of course after a tooth has been extracted there will be a hole left in your jawbone where the tooth has been removed (the tooth's socket). As time passes the shape of this hole will smooth over and fill in with bone. While it can take many weeks and months for this healing process to occur fully, from a practical standpoint after 1 to 2 weeks enough healing will have occurred that the extraction site should only be a minor inconvenience to you.

## Frequently Asked Questions

This is list of the questions we are asked by patients following tooth extraction or minor surgery of the mouth.

### **1. How long does the procedure take?**

Extraction of the wisdom teeth generally takes about one hour including the sedation and recovery period.

### **2. Will there be any pain after surgery?**

Depending on how difficult the extractions are, there may be some discomfort. If you take the Advil as directed, 600mg to start and 400mg - 600mg every 6-8 hours you should be comfortable. You will also receive a prescription for Tylenol #3.

### **3. How long before I can exercise?**

You should wait till the third day after the surgery, and only when you feel up to it. If you exercise and do not feel well or bleeding starts, then stop exercising.

### **4. When can I resume playing sports?**

You should tell the doctor what sport you play and he will advise you on when you can return to play. It will depend on the type of contact involved.

### **5. Will there be a lot of bleeding?**

Before you leave our office we will make sure the bleeding is well under control. We will have you bite down on a piece gauze for 30 minutes at a time in order for the extraction site to start clotting. You will continue this at home until there is no more bleeding.

### **6. Will there be any stitches?**

Depending on the extraction there may be stitches. These are dissolving stitches and can take anywhere between 3-7 days to dissolve. The stitches only dissolve under the skin; the knots you feel with your tongue are going to fall away. It is OK if you swallow them.

### **7. When can I smoke?**

Ideally you should not smoke throughout the entire recovery period and we would encourage you to quit. If you must smoke, do so after the first 4 days.

### **8. How long should I plan on being off work or school?**

Depending on how difficult the extractions are you should leave your schedule free for anywhere between 3-5 days.

### **9. Will there be any swelling or bruising?**

If there is going to be any swelling it will reach it's height in about 2-3 days. Swelling should never increase, decrease then increase. If this should happen it usually indicates a problem and you should contact our office. If you use the ice for the first 24 hours, especially the first 6-8 hours and take your Advil as directed, you will decrease your chances of having any swelling. If there is any

bruising it usually starts to show after the swelling has decreased and is usually brown and yellow not black and blue.

### **10. When can I brush my teeth?**

You may brush your teeth when it is comfortable to do so, while staying away from the extraction sites. It is very important for you to keep your mouth clean. 24 hours after your surgery we want you to start rinsing hourly with salt and warm water, and it is also important to do it after you eat.

### **11. What and when can I eat?**

We want you to drink something as soon as you get home. You cannot have anything too hot or too cold while you are still numb, so keep your drinks at room temperature. You must consume 8 -10 oz of fluids per hour. You should be on a soft diet and nothing crunchy, chewy or crusty. Stay away from small foods like rice, peas, corn or nuts that can easily become trapped in the extraction sites. It is important to maintain a good diet.

### **12. You have given me a lot of instruction, do I need to follow all of them?**

The postoperative instructions were designed to cover the removal of 4 wisdom teeth. Regardless of whether you had one extraction or had all four wisdom teeth removed, you must follow the instructions. This is the best way to ensure a comfortable and problem free recovery.