

Care Following Dental Surgery

Dental surgery is complex in nature and the mouth is a harsh environment for healing tissues as it contains high concentrations of bacteria. It is necessary to do as much as possible to help the healing process and minimize complications such as pain, swelling and bleeding.

Due to the local anaesthetic, you will have a numb lip, cheek or tongue, which can last several hours. Be careful not to suck or bite on these numb areas as this can result in a nasty injury. Please be careful not to burn these areas with any hot foods, drinks or cigarettes.

The formation of a blood clot is critical to promote healing as it acts like a natural 'band-aid' to seal the wound and help prevent infection. The blood clot takes **a few hours** to stabilise and become firm, so it is important to follow these steps to ensure you do not disturb it.

You will be given a piece of gauze to bite down on following an extraction. This pressure you apply while biting is what helps stop the bleeding and the formation of the blood clot. Keep biting on the gauze gently until you get home and then you may dispose of it thoughtfully.

Bleeding - It is common, following any minor oral surgery, for the site to continue to bleed for a few hours. This will mix with the saliva in your mouth and make it seem like there is more bleeding than what there actually is. It is better to spit this out, as it may upset your stomach if you swallow it.

You will be given some extra pieces of gauze. In the case where bleeding persists, simply place a folded piece of the clean gauze on the wound and bite on it with gentle pressure. Sit in an upright position and maintain light pressure for about 30 minutes. If still bleeding, repeat for another 30 minutes and this should stop the bleeding. If bleeding persists you should contact us, so we may assess the situation. If you run out of gauze, you may use a clean handkerchief or something similar to apply pressure. Do not use tissues or anything that may leave debris in the wound site.

Things not to do

Do not rinse your mouth or eat anything for **four hours** – this may wash the blood clot away. If you need a drink, use a straw in such a manner that it does not disturb the surgical site.

Do not place your tongue, finger or anything else near the wound as this may disturb the clot and will promote infection.

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Do not smoke for a **minimum** period of **24 hours** ... the longer you refrain from smoking, the better! Smoking promotes break-down of the blood clot, which will leave a dry, bony socket. This delays healing, promotes infection and can result in a 'dry socket' which is very painful.

Do not do any strenuous exercise or activities for about 24 hours as this will promote bleeding. Avoid activities such as diving, snorkelling and playing musical wind instruments until advised.

Do not lie flat in bed. Sit upright or prop your head up with a couple of pillows. This allows gravity to work for you and helps minimize the swelling.

Do not have any hot foods or drinks for a few hours as this will promote bleeding.

Things to do

Eat soft, nutritious foods, e.g. pasta, eggs, yoghurt, soup etc. Avoid hard foods and those which will place debris in the site such as muesli, cereals, potato chips etc. Avoid chewing near the site.

Maintain your oral hygiene! It is important to keep your mouth clean to reduce the risk of infection. Brush and floss your remaining teeth normally. Take care near the wound and avoid any stitches.

Rinse with warm, salt water 'mouth-baths' after meals – place a tablespoon of salt in a warm glass of water. Place a mouthful of the solution in your mouth and just let it sit over the site / wound until it cools, rinse gently and spit out. Repeat this until you finish the cup. Continue this for 1 week.

Swelling - Everyone who has oral surgery develops some degree of swelling and bruising after the procedure. If you have had wisdom teeth removed it is usually quite pronounced and will limit mouth opening. When you get home place an ice pack on the area for about 15 minutes and then take it off for 5 minutes. Repeat this as often as possible for the first 24 hours as it will help reduce the swelling. The swelling may not reach its maximum for 2-3 days and the bruising is usually delayed, after that time it generally settles quickly.

Post-operative appointments - It is important to attend any scheduled post-operative appointments. This is to review the healing, ensure there is no developing infection and remove any stitches that may need removal.

Questions? If you have any questions or feel like healing is not progressing normally, please contact us at Define Dental as we would love to help you ... (07) 5597 2100!