

Patient Education  
Northwest Center for Oral and Facial Surgery  
University of Washington School of Dentistry  
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**For urgent issues after hours, weekends and holidays please call and ask to page oral surgery  
resident on-call: 206-744-3000**

[nwcofs@uw.edu](mailto:nwcofs@uw.edu)

### Post-Operative Instructions

Thank you for choosing the Northwest Center for Oral and Facial Surgery.

#### What to Expect After Your Oral Surgery:

**Bleeding:** You can expect to have some bleeding or “oozing” for the first 12 to 24 hours after surgery.

- Bite on the gauze placed in your mouth following surgery for at least 1 hour, thereafter, replace with moist gauze changing hourly until the oozing subsides.
- *If you have excessive bleeding:*
  - Use gauze to remove all excess blood clots from your mouth
  - Place a clean, damp gauze pad over the bleeding area only.
  - Press on the gauze firmly for 20 minutes so that no blood escapes. Repeat if needed.
  - ***Call the clinic or oral surgery resident on call if the bleeding does not stop.***

**Swelling and Bruising:** Swelling and pain may increase for the first few days, with the 3<sup>rd</sup> day being the peak, before it starts to subside. If your swelling and pain continue to increase after the peak, ***call the clinic for a follow up appointment.***

- To reduce swelling:
  - Keep your head elevated with pillows. Minimize activity for 8-12 hours after your surgery.
  - Start using ice or cold packs right after your surgery. The cold packs provided are re-usable. Apply the pack over the surgery site for 15 minutes at a time, then remove for 15 minutes. You can repeat this for the first 48 hours after surgery to help limit inflammation. Never apply the ice pack directly to your skin.

#### Activity and Diet:

- We suggest you relax and limit your activity for the rest of the day of your surgery.
- You may resume light activities the day after your surgery if you feel up to it.
- Unless advised otherwise, for 2 days after surgery, drink liquids and eat soft food only (such as milk shakes, eggnog, yogurt, cooked cereal, cottage cheese, smooth soup, mashed potatoes, refried beans, ice cream, pudding, fruit smoothies, protein shakes, etc.).

- On day 3 after surgery, you can eat soft foods that do not require much chewing such as macaroni and cheese, cooked noodles, soft-boiled/scrambled/poached eggs, and soft sandwiches. Avoid tough or crunchy foods, such as pizza, rice, popcorn, chips, and hamburgers. Avoid extremely hot or cold fluids, and spicy or acidic foods while you're healing. On day 4, you can advance your diet as tolerated; most patients can resume their normal diets a week after surgery

#### **Mouth Rinse and Oral Care:**

- If your doctor prescribed chlorhexidine (brand name Peridex) for oral rinsing, start using this the morning after surgery.
- Do NOT brush or rinse your mouth until the morning after surgery.
- Starting day after surgery, rinse your mouth with warm salt water after meals. Stir (1/8 to ½) teaspoon salt into 8 ounces of warm water. Rinsing with salt water will help speed healing and keep the wound(s) clean.
- There will be an opening where the tooth was removed. The opening will gradually fill in with new tissue over the next month. In the meantime, care should be taken to keep the areas clean, particularly after meals, using warm water rinse, gentle brushing, and the irrigation syringe provided.

#### **Irrigation Syringe:**

- Unless advised otherwise, you can start irrigating the wound(s) using the irrigation syringe on the third day after the procedure.
- After meals, first rinse your mouth as described above, then fill the syringe by putting the tip in a glass of tap water, salt water, or prescribed oral rinse pulling up on the plunger. Lean over the sink with your mouth slightly open and angle the tip of the syringe toward the extraction site. Gently push the plunger to flush any food debris out of the area to prevent infection. If you see food debris, irrigate again. It is normal to have some blood mixed with the fluid you are spitting out.

#### **Impacted Teeth:**

Removing impacted teeth is very different from extracting erupted teeth. If you had an impacted tooth removed, you will likely have these symptoms for a short time:

- Difficulty opening your mouth
- Pain while swallowing
- Earache on the side of your surgery

If the impacted tooth was in your lower jaw, you may have numbness in your lower lip or tongue on the side where the tooth was removed. This numbness should go away after several days. Please call for a follow-up appointment if numbness is not improving or resolved by 7-10 days after surgery.

You may have sores on your lips after surgery. Use petroleum jelly (Vaseline) on your lips until they heal.

#### **Medicines:**

- Medication to control pain and prevent infection will be prescribed for you. It is very important that you take all medications as directed.

- Start taking your pain medication before the local anesthetic you received for your surgery wears off. Continue to take it as prescribed.
- Follow the pain medication instructions your doctor gave you. If we believe you may have more severe pain, we will prescribe a stronger pain medication which you will need to buy at a pharmacy.

**What *NOT* to do:**

- Do NOT apply heat to your face for the first 3 days after the operation unless your surgeon told you to do so. Heat can increase the swelling.
- Do NOT use straws, suck on anything, or smoke for at least 7 days. These actions cause negative pressure in your mouth, which can dislodge the blood clot keeping your wound closed, causing more bleeding, increased pain, and delayed healing.

*If you have been told to follow sinus precautions:*

- Do NOT blow your nose, wipe gently instead.
- If you need to sneeze, do so with your mouth **open**.
- Do NOT use straws.
- NO smoking.

**Removable Dental Devices After Implant Surgery:**

- If you usually wear a removable dental device that replaces missing teeth or a retainer that rests on the surgical area, check with your surgeon or general dentist before resuming wear after surgery. It is important not to put pressure on the surgical site.
- If your bite feels different when you start wearing the device again, or if you had a dental implant and it feels like the device is hitting your implant, call your doctor.

**Follow Up Visit:** Not all oral surgery patients need to be seen for a follow-up visit. If your surgeon has recommended you return, or if you have a concern, please call the clinic during business hours at (206) 543-5860.

Questions?

**Oral Surgery Clinic: (206) 543-5860**

**Mon – Fri: 7am – 3pm**

If you have any questions or concerns, please call the clinic during business hours, and leave **one voicemail with your name, date of birth, phone number and message** for us to get back to you as soon as possible. After hours Monday through Friday, call (206) 587-9394 to page the Oral Surgery Resident on call. Weekends and holidays, please call Harborview Medical Center at (206) 744-3000 and ask for the oral surgery resident on call to be paged. They will return your call when they are available. If you feel like you are having a true emergency, call 911.