

If your Doctor recommends removing your wisdom teeth, don't panic. You'll be just as wise after the extraction as you were before. In fact, when these third molars begin to affect your oral health, having them removed is the smartest decision you can make. You'll want to play it safe and follow all aftercare instructions to properly heal and prevent any complications.



### **Why Aftercare is Important:**

Besides some temporary bleeding, discomfort, swelling and bruising after surgery, most patients recover quickly. Nonetheless, you should know that dry socket is the most common preventable surgical complication.

A dry socket develops when the newly formed blood clot within the socket is dislodged or dissolves, exposing bone and nerve endings. In addition to severe pain, symptoms of dry socket as described as bad breath and an unpleasant taste in your mouth and achy radiating pain along the jaw, that prescription pain medication wouldn't take care of.

To prevent potential problems after removing wisdom teeth, here are your post-extraction healing instructions:

### **Swelling**

Apply ice packs to the outside of your mouth intermittently (20 minutes on, 20 minutes off) for up to two days to minimize swelling, bruising or any discomfort. If your tooth was infected prior to removal, your dentist may ask you to use warm, moist compresses rather than ice. Staying propped up in a recliner or with pillows will help keep swelling minimal.



### **Bleeding**

Expect some bleeding, and keep a gauze pad over the extraction site for 20-30 minutes after surgery. For heavier bleeding, bite down on a gauze pad or place your fingers over the pad consistently applying pressure for 30 minutes before removing it. Another alternative is to use a moistened tea bag for the same amount of time. The tannic acid in the tea contracts the bleeding vessels, which helps the blood clot set.

### **Mouth Care**

Limit eating, drinking and talking for the first two hours following surgery, and plan to rest for the remainder of the day. To keep from dislodging the blood clot, don't rinse vigorously or use a straw when drinking. Additionally, avoid rigorous exercise for a few days, as well as smoking or spitting excessively on the day of the surgery or as long as there is bleeding. After 12 hours, you can gently rinse with mouthwash or a salt water rinse. Carefully brush your teeth the night of the surgery, but avoid the surgical area as best you can.



## Diet

After the bleeding stops, drink lots of lukewarm or cold fluids to keep hydrated. Eat regular meals, but begin with clear liquids and soft foods. Puddings, gelatins, eggs, mashed potatoes and cooked cereals are good choices, as are vegetables, meats and fruits that have been liquefied in a blender. To avoid dislodging the blood clot, avoid drinking carbonated beverages and eating foods like popcorn, peanuts, rice and pasta that may leave particles in your socket.



## Medications

Take prescribed medications exactly as directed. And remember, if you are taking a strong narcotic pain medication, you'll be asked not to drive or operate machinery and to avoid alcoholic beverages.

## C-PAP

If you have been advised by your doctor to use a C-PAP machine, use it during your recovery to prevent respiratory complications with post-op medications. This includes use of C-PAP for sleeping during the day.



## When to Call Your Oral Surgeon

Any pain and swelling you have should improve each day, but call your Doctor if you experience any of the following:

- Swelling that gets worse instead of better.
- Excessive bleeding that won't subside with pressure.
- Severe, throbbing pain three to four days following surgery.
- An elevated fever that persists.



## Drs. Howerton, Hopkin, Kennedy & Clark's TELEPHONE AND CALL POLICY:

Since the doctors share night and weekend emergency calls, the doctor that did your surgery may or may not be the doctor to return your emergency call. Please limit your after-hours and weekend calls to those of a true emergency nature such as prolonged, uncontrolled bleeding, allergic reactions, temperature elevation of 101° that persists for 24 hours, or repeated nausea and vomiting. If you feel you are going to run short of pain medication, please try to call the office during regular office hours (8:00-5:00 Monday thru Friday) so that the problem can be resolved quickly and efficiently. If an emergency develops, you can always reach one of the doctors through the answering service via our regular office phone number.