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General and Cosmetic Dentistry

Post-operative Instructions for a Tooth Extraction

After tooth extraction, it's important for a blood clot to form to stop the bleeding and begin the healing process. That's why we ask you to bite on a damp gauze pad for 30–60 minutes after the appointment. So, 30-60 minutes is how long you need to leave gauze on after a tooth extraction.

If the bleeding or oozing persists, place another gauze pad and bite firmly, replacing the gauze as needed. You may have to do this several times.

After the blood clot forms, it is important not to disturb or dislodge the clot as it aids healing. **Do not rinse vigorously, suck on straws, smoke, drink alcohol, or brush teeth next to the extraction site for 72 hours.** These activities may dislodge or dissolve the clot and lead to a dry socket.

If this occurs, symptoms of continued pain or increased pain may occur after the third post-operative day. Limit vigorous exercise for the next 24 hours as this will increase blood pressure and may cause more bleeding from the extraction site.

Pain & Swelling After Tooth Extractions

After the tooth is extracted, you may feel some pain and experience some swelling. An ice pack or an unopened bag of frozen peas or corn applied to the area will keep swelling to a minimum. Take pain medications as prescribed. The swelling usually subsides after 72 hours. If swelling begins to increase after the third post-operative day, please contact your doctor immediately.

Use the pain medication as directed. (See the section on pain control for "Wisdom Tooth Removal.") Call the office if the medication doesn't seem to be working. If antibiotics are prescribed, continue to take them for the indicated length of time, even if signs and symptoms of infection are gone. Drink lots of fluid and eat nutritious soft food on the day of the extraction. You can eat normally as soon as you are comfortable.

Resume Normal Activities

It is important to resume your normal dental routine after 24 hours. This should include brushing and flossing your teeth after an extraction at least once a day as well as rinsing with warm salt water after meals to prevent food impaction in the socket(s). DO NOT rinse with peroxide, even if diluted. This will speed healing and help keep your mouth fresh and clean.

After a few days, you will feel fine and can resume your normal activities (including exercising after a tooth extraction). If you have heavy bleeding, severe pain, continued swelling after 3–4 days, or a reaction to the medication, call our office immediately at 256-881-4441.