

# SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CENTER FOR ORAL AND FACIAL SURGERY

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## POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS AND INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Surgery of any kind places a stress on your body. Get adequate rest and avoid strenuous activity for a few days following your procedure. If you received intravenous sedation or general anesthesia, it is important for someone to stay with you until you have recovered from the effects of these medications.

Swelling, discomfort, and restricted jaw function are expected, and so need not cause alarm. These may be minimized by the following instructions. Please read them carefully. It is strongly urged that they be followed.

### 1. **Bleeding:**

Apply constant firm pressure on the gauze over the surgical site. This acts as a pressure dressing to control any active bleeding. A mild oozing of blood is normal for the first few days. If bleeding is excessive, place a roll of gauze or a moistened tea bag over the surgical site and bite firmly for 45 minutes with constant pressure. Repeat if necessary. Avoid rinsing, spitting, smoking and drinking through a straw, as all of these will disturb the blood clot and reinitiate bleeding. Assume a semi-upright position, use two pillows in bed. If significant bleeding still continues, call the office for advice. Do not go to sleep with gauze in your mouth.

### 2. **Swelling:**

Swelling and bruising are normal reactions to surgery, and vary from patient to patient and from one surgery to another. Application of ice to the surgical sites during the **first 24 hours** helps reduce the amount of swelling. Use the ice packs 20 minutes on/ 20 minutes off or alternate from side to side every 20 minutes. After the first 24 hours, the ice will not have much effect on swelling, but may make the surgical site feel better. **Do not** use ice after the second day.

Swelling usually reaches its maximum about 48 - 72 hours after surgery. It is not unusual to have difficulty opening the mouth due to post-operative swelling in the muscles. This should resolve on its own with time.

Application of moist heat 4 to 6 times per day to the surgical sites *beginning 72 hours after surgery* increases the local blood circulation and helps to take away swelling. Do not apply heat until 3 days after surgery unless the doctor tells you otherwise. Bruising will resolve on its own, but may take up to a week or more.

### 3. **Infection:**

Most oral surgical procedures in healthy patients have a low risk of developing an infection. If the doctor felt that you were at increased risk of infection because of your general health or the nature of the procedure, you will be placed on antibiotic medication. It is important that you follow the directions on the label and take the medication until it is completely gone. An antibiotic oral rinse may also be prescribed. If you develop hives or a rash, discontinue all medication and contact the office immediately.

There may be a slight elevation in temperature for 24 to 48 hours after surgery. This is a normal body response to the surgery. If the temperature persists or is greatly elevated, please notify the office. A post-operative infection usually takes about three days to develop.

### 4. **Pain:**

After any surgical procedure, swelling and some discomfort are anticipated. This varies considerably from patient to patient, even after identical procedures. This normally reaches its peak 48 - 72 hours after surgery, then starts to decrease. If you have only minor pain, try an over-the-counter drug, such as Tylenol, Advil, or Aleve. Avoid aspirin and aspirin-containing products, as these interfere with blood clotting. If you have been given a prescription for a stronger pain medication, have it filled at a pharmacy convenient for you and take the medication as directed. The pain medication may make you drowsy, so you should not drive a car or perform any important tasks while taking the medication. The pain medication should never be taken on an empty stomach. If you develop hives or a rash, discontinue all medication and contact the office immediately. If the pain relief is not adequate, call the office for advice.

### 5. **Nausea:**

Post-operative nausea is usually due to swallowing a small amount of blood during and/or after surgery. A small amount of carbonated drink, such as 7-Up or ginger ale every hour for 5 or 6 hours will usually relieve this feeling. Sometimes pain medications can cause nausea. If nausea continues, contact this office.

**6. Diet:**

A bland liquid diet is recommended for the day of surgery. Following this, soft food high in vitamins and protein is advised. Avoid crunchy foods, which may irritate the surgical site. Resume your normal diet as soon as possible.

**7. Oral Hygiene:**

Do not rinse your mouth for the first day following surgery. This will loosen the blood clot and reinitiate bleeding. The day following surgery, the mouth should be rinsed gently with warm salt water (may be mixed with 1/2 strength hydrogen peroxide) solution 5 or 6 times a day (after meals and at bedtime.) If you were given a prescription mouth rinse (such as Peridex) use it as directed in addition to the saltwater rinses. If you were given an irrigating syringe, use it to gently flush out the extraction site with warm salt water 2 - 3 times per day, starting 5 days after surgery. You may brush your teeth beginning the day after surgery, but avoid the area of surgery. If the surgical site is tender, you may clean the area with Peridex on a cotton swab.

8. Smoking is a great irritation to the surgical site, and will delay healing and increase the risk of infection. Smoking should be avoided or greatly reduced during the healing period.
9. Your lips may be dry and cracked due to stretching the corners of your mouth during surgery. Your lips should be kept moist with vaseline or other lip ointments.
10. You may feel a hole where a tooth was removed. This will fill in with normal tissue over the next few months.
11. Sutures may have been used to close the surgical wound. They may be of the type that dissolve. If suture removal is necessary, this will be done at your follow-up visit.
12. It is now appreciated that antibiotics will inactivate most birth control pills. Sexually active women who take birth control pills should use another method of contraception for the remainder of the menstrual cycle if antibiotics are prescribed.

*Should you have any post-operative problems or questions, do not hesitate to call the office so we may help you.*

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