

## **Post-Op Following a Tooth Extraction**

Tooth extractions occur for a number of reasons. Maybe the tooth decay appeared too advanced to save the tooth and the doctor feared for the bone. Perhaps, your gum disease spread at such a rate that the integrity of the tooth was compromised. Sometimes, trauma happens and causes the need for extraction. Extraction is the term coined for “pulling” or “removing” a tooth.

You can expect to experience some discomfort, mild pain, as well as general changes in your mouth, after having a tooth pulled. Your dentist will provide you simple instructions and possibly prescribe some sort of medicine to help with any pain or inflammation. It’s necessary that you not only follow the doctor’s instructions, but that you also communicate openly with your doctor about any changes. In addition to the doctor’s notes, this article will assist you in your post-op.

### **Why is my mouth numb?**

Before removing your tooth, the dentist will administer some anesthetics. This part of the process is crucial, so that you do not feel her removing your tooth. While it aids in the extraction process, it will leave you numb for a few hours after the procedure. Expect to feel this way for a short period of time. Remember not to eat anything that requires a great deal of chewing while you are numb. You want to avoid biting your cheeks, lips, or tongue. If your numbness lasts beyond a few hours, contact your dentist immediately.

### **Why am I bleeding?**

It is completely normal to experience bleeding after having a tooth extraction. Gauze will be gently placed over the gums where the tooth used to sit. This will help your blood to clot, as well as keep blood from draining in your mouth. Leave the gauze in there for a solid 30-45 minutes, as the clotting takes time.

Refrain from chewing on the gauze, as that will slow down the healing process, as well as cause you to bleed more.

In the event that you continue to bleed, follow these instructions:

-Apply clean, slightly dampened gauze to the extraction site. This can be accomplished by folding up a small piece of gauze, so that it fits properly over the site. Wet it under the sink with warm water.

-You can effectively apply pressure by simply closing your teeth over the gauze to hold it in place over the site. This needs to happen for roughly 30 minutes. If the gauze appears to become soaked in blood, you will need to replace it with dry, clean gauze.

-Do not chew on the gauze or suck on the extraction site.

-Expect to see blood leak from the site. However, if heavy, excessive bleeding continues to occur, you need to call your dentist.

### **Be Cautious**

Once the blood clot forms over your extraction site, do not mess with it. Refrain from picking at it, brushing it, or doing anything to irritate it. Your body needs to heal and the clot is part of that process.

- Avoid drinking from a straw or rinsing/swishing the site excessively for at least 24 hours. Creating suction in the mouth can loosen the clot and delay the site from healing.
- No alcohol of any kind (including mouthwash that contains such) for the first 24 hours.
- No smoking after the surgery. This too can loosen the clot or cause infection.
- No strenuous activity or exercise for at least 24 hours.
- Be mindful of excessive pain in the site. Some patients report dry sockets forming after extraction. These dry sockets can prove super painful. If you end up getting a dry socket, contact your dentist. She can apply medicine to the socket that will prevent further pain.

### **How do I clean my mouth?**

Because of the sensitivity of the clot and the extraction site, it's important to be careful and act cautiously when you clean your mouth. For the next 24-48 hours, avoid brushing the extraction site and the teeth immediately around it. The best thing is to brush the other teeth in your mouth, as well as floss, followed up by a salt-water rinse. The saline solution will act as a healing agent to the site. No mouthwash other than this saline. Also, remember not to rinse too quickly or vigorously, as this can impair the healing process. You may also consider brushing your tongue more than usual to eliminate the bad breath that many patients report after an extraction.

### **Controlling Your Pain**

Sometimes after an extraction, your mouth becomes pretty swollen. Your doctor may prescribe pain medication to help alleviate your pain, as well as something to lessen the inflammation. Take the medicine as directed by your dentist. If your pain persists, or you appear to have some sort of reaction to the medication, call your

doctor immediately. She may need to change the dose or the medication, but do not make changes yourself. Consult with her first.

### **Swollen Cheeks & Gums**

It is really common for patients to experience swelling in their cheeks and gums, as well as pain, after having an extraction. Aside from the medication, icing your mouth may be beneficial. You simply put ice cubes in a bag and place that directly on your cheek, or you wrap the bag in a hand towel or washcloth and place that to your cheeks. Another method is to place a damp washcloth in your freezer and then, apply that to your mouth.

### **Time to Call the Dentist**

If the pain appears to increase, instead of dissipating, or if you begin running a fever, have nausea, or vomiting, these may be signs of infection. Call your doctor if are unable to get these things under control and go to the emergency room, if you are unable to reach your dentist.

### **Diet & Fluids After Extraction**

After having your teeth removed, your body will need lots of fluids. Water is going to be your best friend, as well as soft foods. Your doctor may put you on a liquid diet for a few days and slowly work you back up to solid food. Be mindful of what you put in your mouth. Soups, yogurt, puddings, jello, and other liquids might be best for a few days. Avoid chips, nuts, hard, sticky candies, or anything of the sort that can hurt the extraction site. Additionally, refrain from sucking anything through a straw to avoid those dry sockets we previously discussed.

### **Post-Op With the Doc**

Sometimes, dentists place sutures in your mouth that will remain for a few days to a few weeks. Then, they will remove them at your post-op appointment. Be sure to follow up and attend that post-op appointment. Sutures left in for too long can cause infection. Plus, you want your doctor to assess how your healing process is coming along.

Tooth extractions are not much fun, but sometimes necessary. The bottom line is to follow the directions given you by your dentist, as well as stay on top of your healing. If anything appears awry, contact your dentist immediately. And follow-up. This will ensure a clean bill of health.