

Recovering from Surgery

Normally after surgery, you may experience some temporary changes in the mouth and cheek area. Here's what to expect:

Bleeding. You may experience a slight oozing of blood the first day and night after surgery. Remember that one drop of blood mixed with your saliva may lead you to believe that your bleeding is much worse than it actually is. There may also be some discoloration in the area of surgery. This black and blue mark will normally turn yellow and fade within a few days.

After the surgery, a gauze pack is placed on the extraction site by the dentist to prevent excessive bleeding and confine the blood while clotting takes place. Leave the gauze pack in place for 30-45 minutes after leaving the office.

If you have dark red jello-like material forming in your mouth it is a sign of excessive bleeding. Moisten a tea bag and place it over the extraction site. Maintain pressure by closing the teeth for one hour. Repeat if necessary.

Pain. Discomfort is usually the greatest the first night after surgery. You will probably be prescribed a pain medication. But if your pain continues to be severe, be sure to call.

Swelling. It's common to experience a temporary swelling of your cheeks and an inability to open your mouth wide. You may be advised to apply ice packs on the day of surgery to alleviate this swelling. Swelling may increase over the next 1 or 2 days. If this occurs, you might apply heat at some point during your recovery. Warm, moist towels, a hot water bottle or an electric heating pad may reduce the swelling and ease any discomfort. But make certain that the heat is not excessive. Extreme heat can cause painful skin burns.

Rinsing. Gently rinse your mouth the day after the extraction with warm salt water (1 teaspoon of salt in one glass of warm water). It is important to rinse after meals to keep food particles out of the surgery site for several days after surgery.

Post-Operative Do's...

DO eat soft food such as soup, blenderized meals and gelatin desserts the first day. Begin eating solid foods the next day or as soon as you can chew comfortably. Occasionally swallowing blood will cause nausea and vomiting. Sip on sugar-free carbonated beverages to overcome this condition.

DO drink lots of fluid, but avoid using a straw. It can create suction that may loosen the blood clot protecting the socket.

DO apply ice packs intermittently to your face to reduce any swelling the day of surgery. To reduce swelling after the day of surgery, follow the recommendations on the use of heat.

DO plan to take off from work or school because your routine may be disrupted for a few days after surgery.

...and Don'ts

DON'T rinse your mouth or spit forcefully the day of surgery. This can loosen the blood clot. To promote healing, you may be asked to rinse gently with a salt-water solution for several days after surgery.

DON'T smoke after surgery. It can create a suction that could also loosen the protective blood clot.

DON'T drink alcohol while you're taking any prescribed pain medication.

DON'T brush your teeth in the area of surgery the day that your wisdom teeth are removed. After that, gentle brushing is recommended until the area is healed.

DON'T eat hard foods- such as rock candy or hard nuts- for about 6 to 8 weeks. Surgery can weaken the jaw bone, making it more susceptible to fracture.