

Post-Op Instructions for Dental Procedures

This instruction sheet has been developed for those patients who have undergone surgical procedures. Please read these instructions carefully. If you have any further questions or if you are not sure what you are experiencing is normal, please don't hesitate to call the office at (814) 375-0500.

Discomfort

It is not unusual to have a certain amount of discomfort following any surgical procedure. In most situations one or two extra strength Tylenol or up to four Advil (Ibuprofen or Motrin) can be taken every 4 hours or as needed for pain. Never take a medication that goes against your family physician's advice. It's best to take them immediately before pain sets in; it's easier to prevent pain than to stop it. Regardless, at least take the medication before bedtime. Most importantly, remember to take all medications as directed.

Swelling

Minor swelling may follow your surgical procedure. This most likely is just a healing reaction from your body. To minimize swelling, ICE is imperative immediately after the surgery. It should be used on and off every 10 minutes for 6-8 hours (depending on the extent of the surgery). Do not use it constantly or it may impede the blood supply to the area. After the first 6-8 hours of ice, use it on and off for the rest of the day. On the day after surgery, a warm compress can be used in the place of an ice pack. Apply the compress for 20 minutes every four hours.

It is also helpful if you do not lie down with your head flat. If you must do so, prop your head up on several pillows; this prevents blood from pooling in your head while you are resting or asleep. Regardless, it is not unusual to see some slight increase in swelling when you wake up. Most of the time this slight swelling goes down as you get up and move around.

If swelling seems excessive or starts increasing after the fourth post-operative day, please call our office as soon as possible. Of particular concern is swelling beneath the jaw (neck) or under the eyes.

Bleeding

A small amount of bleeding is possible, usually immediately after surgery; it may discolor your saliva slightly, so don't be alarmed. If, however, continuous bleeding occurs (even if it is a small amount), call our office immediately.

If a large amount of bleeding starts, stay calm; most of the time a little pressure with your finger over the surgical site will stop it.

Procedures to slow or stop bleeding:

1. Look in your mouth to see where the bleeding is coming from. If it is on the outside (cheek side) it is very easy to stop, as you can simply place your fore-finger against your cheek or lips opposite the area.
2. If the bleeding is inside your mouth (tongue side), it is more difficult to stop for obvious reasons. In this case, you can place wet gauze on the area and place pressure for several minutes. If this works, fine. If it doesn't, try a wet tea bag over the area and apply pressure. Again, please contact our office if bleeding cannot be controlled.

Dental Implants

Following surgery, you will be asked to bite firmly but gently on a gauze pad to stop the bleeding. You will be given a package of gauze to take home with you and place over the surgical site. You'll have to make sure to change the pads and use them until the bleeding stops completely. Sometimes biting on a moist tea bag will be prescribed as well. If bleeding persists or increases call our office right away.

If you have some discomfort after the surgery you will be given a painkiller. You can also decrease discomfort and swelling by applying an ice pack for about twenty minutes for the first six hours following surgery. You can continue applying an ice pack for as long as two days following surgery. After two days, apply moist heat to the area such as tea bag.

To minimize swelling and bleeding you may want to keep your head elevated for the first twenty-four to forty-eight hours after the surgery. You should make sure you relax as much as possible and avoid all strenuous activities for as long as three days following the dental implants surgery.

You'll have to drink at least eight glasses of water or fruit juice every day and try to limit your diet to soft foods such as yogurt or soup during the first week after surgery.

You will be asked to rinse your mouth with warm saltwater solution - one teaspoon of salt in one cup of water - about three to four times a day to further disinfect the area. You must make sure you spit carefully to avoid any complications.

Once your jaw bone grows around the titanium posts, you may experience a little discomfort around the area that can last for several weeks. An over-the-counter pain reliever, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen, should make the pain go away.