

Post extraction advice

Having a tooth extracted can be traumatic and we would suggest that you take it easy for the rest of the day. Take as little exercise as you can, and rest as much as you can. Keep your head up to avoid any bleeding. Avoid hot food or drinks until the anaesthetic wears off. This is important as you cannot feel pain properly and may burn or scald your mouth. Also be careful not to chew your cheek. This is quite a common problem, which can happen when there is no feeling.

Do I rinse my mouth out? Do not be tempted to rinse the area for the first 24 hours. It is important to allow the socket to heal, and you must be careful not to damage the blood clot by eating on that side or letting your tongue disturb it. This can allow infection into the socket and affect healing.

Is there anything I should avoid? Avoid alcohol for at least 24 hours, as this can encourage bleeding and delay healing. Eat and drink lukewarm food as normal but avoid chewing on that area of your mouth. Smoking should be avoided for as long as you can after an extraction and at least for the rest of the day.

When should I brush? It is just as important, if not more so, to keep your mouth clean after an extraction. However, you do need to be careful around the extraction site.

What do I do if it bleeds? You may notice some slight bleeding for the first day or so. If you do notice bleeding, do not rinse out, but apply pressure to the socket. Bite firmly on a folded piece of clean cotton material such as a handkerchief for at least 15 minutes. Make sure this is placed directly over the extraction site and that the pad is replaced if necessary. If the bleeding has not stopped after an hour or two, contact your dentist.

Is there anything I can do to help my mouth? It is important to keep your mouth and the extraction site as clean as possible, making sure that the socket is kept clear of all food and debris. Don't rinse for the first 24 hours, and this will help your mouth to start healing. After this time use a salt-water mouthwash, as this helps to heal the socket. A teaspoon of salt in a glass of warm water gently rinsed around the socket twice a day can help to clean and heal the area. Keep this up for at least a week or for as long as your dentist tells you.

I am in pain, what should I take? There will usually be some tenderness in the area for the first few days, and in most cases some simple pain relief is enough to ease the discomfort. What you would normally take for a headache should be sufficient. However, always follow the manufacturer's instructions and if in doubt check with your doctor first. Do not take aspirin, as this will make your mouth bleed.

I am still in pain, what could it be? Sometimes an infection can get in the socket, which can be very painful. This is where there is little or no blood clot in the tooth socket and the bony socket walls are exposed and become infected. This is called a dry socket and in some cases can be worse than the original toothache. In this case, it is important to see your dentist, who may place a dressing in the socket and prescribe a course of antibiotics to help relieve the infection. You may also feel the sharp edge of the socket with your tongue and sometimes small pieces of bone may work their way to the surface of the socket. This is perfectly normal.

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