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Post-Operative Instructions Following Oral Surgery

These instructions are for patients who have undergone minor oral surgery procedures such surgical removal of teeth, roots and oral biopsies.

What to expect

Following surgery your mouth will be numb. The local anaesthetic will take a couple of hours to wear off, but when it does you will experience some discomfort. It is therefore important that you take some painkillers to pre-empt this. Depending on your medical history, medication such as paracetamol and ibuprofen are often helpful - but please ensure that you read the instructions with the medicine to ensure that you are taking the correct dose at the correct time. If required stronger painkillers may be prescribed. Take your painkillers regularly for the first couple of days to minimise any discomfort and reduce inflammation.

Swelling, bruising and jaw stiffness are common complications usually peaking 24 to 48 hours after surgery. This will then settle over the next few days. During this period choose your foods carefully – a soft diet is recommended.

Some patients may have treatment under general anaesthesia. This may leave you feeling tired. You may also have some muscular ache or discomfort. This will settle over 24 hours. Nausea and sickness can also occur. You need to have someone to take you home and stay with you the night after the operation. You should not drive or operate machinery for 48 hours after the general anaesthetic. Please speak to the anaesthetist for further information.

Mouthcare

It is important that you maintain good oral hygiene following surgery. This will reduce the risk of infection. Avoid actively rinsing your mouth on the day after the surgery as may cause an extraction socket or wound to start bleeding. The day after surgery start using a mouthwash three times a day. A chlorhexidine based mouthwash such as corsodyl is ideal. It can though stain teeth if you used for prolonged periods. You can also use warm salty mouth rinses, especially after eating to remove any food debris.

Tooth brushing should continue as normal. Use a soft tooth brush or soften the bristles in warm water. Try to be gentle but thorough. You might want to be particularly careful not to hurt yourself by avoiding the surgical site or at least brushing very carefully around it until your discomfort subsides.

Smoking

Smoking will make infection more likely, so avoiding smoking for at least a week after surgery. This may be an opportunity to consider stopping.

Exercise

Avoid vigorous exercise or workouts for until your mouth feels a bit better (at least 48 hours) - exercise might make you more likely to bleed.

Antibiotics

Infection is unlikely, but does happen. Antibiotics will be prescribed if clinically indicated. If antibiotics are prescribed after treatment it is important to take them and finish the course.

Antibiotics can interact with other drugs. Women taking the oral contraceptive pill should use additional precautions . Some antibiotics can also interfere with warfarin increasing the risk of bleeding. If there are any concerns please ask or discuss with your doctor or pharmacist.

A particular complication of tooth extraction is a 'dry socket' infection. This is a very localised and painful condition which tends to start a few days after surgery. It is due to the loss of the blood clot from the extraction socket. It can occur whether or not you've been prescribed antibiotics. It requires a topical dressing to help ease the symptoms. Please call for advice

Sutures (stitches)

If you have stitches, these will dissolve in a couple of weeks.

Bleeding/

It is normal to expect a small amount of bleeding from the surgical site for the first 24- 48 hours following the procedure. It will be more likely if you are taking medicines such as aspirin, clopidrogel and warfarin.

If bleeding occurs ,roll up a clean handkerchief or gauze swab and place it on the bleeding point. Either apply pressure or bite down (if an extraction) on the roll for 20 minutes. If bleeding persists please call the Ward or Day Surgery Unit for advice