



## The Atlanta Center for Restorative Dentistry

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### Post-operative Support

Subsequent to any procedure, we are committed to providing the same quality of care that began during your initial visit. To that end, please refer to some general post-operative guidelines below and, by all means, call at any hour of any day to report any continuing problem.

### The Day of Surgery

1. Once the anesthesia loses its effect, you may begin to take the prescribed pain medicine as directed by your doctor to alleviate discomfort, but only in small doses and only after eating. Any pain medications can cause nausea and vomiting. It is very important that you have some food in your stomach before you take them.
2. Do not disturb the area of surgery. The first stages of healing are aided by placing tissues at rest. Avoid vigorous chewing, excessive spitting or rinsing, and keep your tongue and fingers away from the surgical site as initial healing may be delayed, active bleeding restarted, or infection introduced.
3. Expect minor bleeding or oozing from the operative site. This bleeding may continue throughout the first day. For the first hour, keep firm pressure on the area of surgery by biting on the gauze sponge placed in your mouth at the office. However, if bleeding persists, continue pressure on fresh folded gauze for an additional 30 minutes to an hour. Biting on a moist tea bag wrapped in gauze may help control persistent oozing from the surgical site. Tea has an ingredient that promotes blood clotting.

If active bleeding should recur at any time, carefully rinse your mouth with cold water and apply a fresh gauze sponge to the bleeding site. Firm pressure for 15-30 minutes usually controls the problem. Should active bleeding persist, please call the office.

4. Limit physical activity during the first 24-48 hours after surgery. Overexertion may lead to post-operative bleeding and discomfort. When you lie down, keep your head elevated on a pillow.
5. Pain following oral surgery will be most severe within the first 6-8 hours after the operation. To limit the amount of pain, you should take Motrin 800 mg or Advil before the numbness wears off. If you have to take the prescribed severe pain medication, remember to eat some food prior to that and start slowly. Please do not drink alcoholic beverages while taking prescription pain medication. Do not wait for the pain to become unbearable before using some form of pain medication, as then it will be more difficult to control. Moderate to severe pain usually does not last longer than 24-48 hours, and there should be no more than slight pain or discomfort after the third day. Persistent or increasing pain 3-4 days following oral surgery may be caused by early loss of the blood clot (dry socket) or infection. If you feel that this may be happening to you, please contact us so that we can help make you more comfortable.
6. Swelling related to the surgical procedure usually develops during the first 12-24 hours following surgery, often increasing on the second day. It should begin to subside by the third day. Swelling can be minimized a great deal by wearing an ice pack on the side of your face for 30 minutes on, then 30 minutes off, immediately following the procedure. If an ice pack is unavailable or if it melts, fill a durable plastic bag with crushed ice. Anti-inflammatory medications such as Motrin or Advil also help decrease swelling.

7. Fluid intake is important. You should start with clear carbonated beverages, such as ginger ale, Seven-Up, or Sprite. Once your stomach has settled, you can advance to other fluids such as water, tea, soda, broth, soup, or juice. Initially avoid dairy products such as milk, milk shakes, and egg nogs. Also avoid hot liquids until the numbness has worn off, and the bleeding has stopped. It is important to drink plenty of fluids.
8. Avoid using a straw for several days as it may cause the blood clot to dislodge and delay healing.
9. Food selection is largely a matter of your choice. Soft, cool foods that require little or no chewing are most easily tolerated at this time (avoid nuts, rice, seeds, etc.). A nutritious diet throughout your healing process is most important to your comfort and temperament. Hungry people become irritable and less able to deal with discomfort that can follow surgery. Since you will be taking medication, it is important to remember that eating can prevent nausea sometimes associated with certain medications. Once your stomach has settled, soups, broiled fish, stewed chicken, mashed potatoes, macaroni and cheese, and cooked vegetables can be added to your diet as your comfort indicates. Ensure, Carnation Instant Breakfast, and yogurt supply excellent added nutrition.
10. Take any special medication such as antibiotics we have prescribed on the specified dosing schedule. Yogurt with active cultures or acidophilus should be taken while on antibiotics to prevent diarrhea. It is important to take the antibiotics to completion. If you are given antibiotics and take birth control pills, you should be aware that the birth control pill may become ineffective; therefore take appropriate precautions.
11. Take any regularly scheduled medication (for diabetes, high blood pressure, etc.) on your regular schedule unless advised to do otherwise.
12. Do not smoke, as it tends to slow the healing process and may also contribute to development of a dry socket. We strongly recommend that you stop smoking permanently. Smoking compromises the healing of ANY dental treatment.
13. Do not drive an automobile for 24 hours following surgery if you have had intravenous sedation, or if you are taking prescription pain medication.
14. If you were informed that a sinus communication occurred during surgery, as a result of the close relationship between the roots of your upper teeth and your sinuses, or if you have had some surgery that involved work near your sinuses or in your sinuses, please follow these instructions:
  - Do not blow your nose.
  - Do not sneeze through your nose. If the urge to sneeze arises, sneeze with your mouth open.
  - Do not smoke or use a straw.
  - Avoid swimming and strenuous activity for at least one week.
  - It is not uncommon to have a slight amount of bleeding from the nose for several days.
  - Please remember that, occasionally, a second procedure may be required if there is persistent sinus communication.

### **The Day Following Surgery and Thereafter**

1. On the morning of the day following surgery, rinse your mouth carefully with a solution made by adding 1 teaspoon of salt to 8 ounces of warm water. DO NOT SPIT! Let the water dribble out of your mouth. Repeat three times a day until remaining soreness subsides. Resume brushing any remaining teeth, but not in the immediate surgical area. We will let you know when you can resume brushing. Please do not use a syringe or Water Pik during the first two weeks, unless otherwise instructed. This can dislodge the blood clot.
2. You may experience a slight elevation in temperature for 24 to 48 hours. If you experience a high temperature, or if fever persists, please call us.

3. Do not worry about stitches. Stitches (also known as sutures) are usually placed to control bleeding, aid healing, and help prevent food from collecting in the surgical site, especially for lower teeth. The sutures we use usually dissolve in three to five days.
4. Any swelling, soreness, or stiffness in the jaw muscles can be relieved by applying a warm, moist towel to the affected side of the face several times a day. Moist heat should be used after the first 24 hours. If swelling, tenderness, or pain should increase after the first few days, call the office.
5. Sometimes a soft diet may be necessary for the first few days following surgery. Most patients are able to resume regular food intake within a short time.
6. Bruising marks may appear on the skin of the face during the first few days after surgery. Moist heat application will help relieve this condition. You may also experience dryness around the corners of your mouth if they are stretched out. Keep them moist with lip ointment.

### **What Are Dry Sockets?**

Dry sockets continue to be the most common problem people experience following dental surgery. They arise due to premature loss of a blood clot in the empty tooth socket and affect approximately one out of five patients. This seems to occur with greater frequency in people who smoke or are taking birth control pills. While both jaws can be affected, they usually occur in the lower jaw on the third to fifth day. They cause a deep, dull, continuous aching on the affected side(s). Patients may first notice the pain starting in the ear radiating down towards the chin. It frequently begins in the middle of the night, and the Motrin medication usually doesn't help. Treatment involves placing a medicated dressing in the "empty" tooth socket. This will help decrease the pain and protect the socket from food particles. The effectiveness in alleviating the pain lasts for 24-48 hours and usually will require dressing changes every day or two for five to seven days. Dressings are usually removed when you have been pain free for two to three days. The dressing doesn't aid in healing. The only reason to place a dressing is for pain control. If Motrin is controlling the pain, the socket will heal without a dressing.

Faithful compliance with these instructions will add to your comfort and hasten your recovery. Be sure to follow these instructions carefully. Only in this way can you avoid the complications which lead to unnecessary discomfort and delayed recovery. Should any undue reaction or complications arise, notify the office immediately.

We are always available!