

Care After Your Dental Treatment

For Advanced General Dentistry patients

This handout explains self-care after your dental treatment.

Your surgeon today was Dr. _____.

Please carefully follow the instructions in this handout.

General

- Do not disturb the wound in your mouth. Doing so may irritate it and cause infection or bleeding.
- If you are a smoker, try not to smoke at all, or smoke as little as possible for at least 72 hours (3 days) after surgery. Smoking will slow your healing.



Use an ice or cold pack to reduce swelling after your dental treatment. See instructions on page 2.

Bleeding

- Some bleeding or “oozing” is normal after dental surgery.
- To reduce bleeding, rest quietly. If you lie down, be sure to use a pillow under your head.
- You may want to put a towel on your pillow or use an old pillow in case you have staining at night.

If you have a lot of bleeding:

- Use gauze to remove all excess blood clots.
- Place a clean, damp gauze pad over the bleeding area.
- Press firmly or bite down on the gauze. Keep it in place for 20 minutes, so that no blood escapes.
- If the gauze becomes soaked with blood, do not remove it. Place another gauze pad over it and call your doctor.
- Bleeding may occur again in 2 to 3 days as the clot forms again. If this happens, repack the area with new gauze, and apply direct pressure for 20 minutes.



Call your doctor if your symptoms get worse or if you cannot keep food or water down.

Nausea and Vomiting

- If blood drains into your stomach, you may have nausea and vomiting. This usually goes away once the blood is vomited.
- Prescription pain medicines can also cause nausea and vomiting. If your pain medicines give you an upset stomach, try taking them after a meal.
- Call your doctor if your symptoms get worse or if you cannot keep food or water down. It is important for you not to get dehydrated.
- Sitting still can help ease nausea or an upset stomach.

Pain

- Pain after surgery is normal. Pain medicines can help reduce your pain, but they will not make it go away completely. Expect some soreness for a while.
- Take your pain medicines exactly as prescribed. Talk with your doctor before taking any other pain medicines.

Swelling

Some swelling after surgery is expected. The area will be puffy, but have normal color and temperature. Swelling may last for 4 or 5 days.

If the color or temperature changes, call your doctor, as this may be a sign of infection.

Ice or Cold Packs

To help lessen swelling, start using an ice or cold pack right after your surgery:

- Apply the pack to the side of your face, over the surgery site.
- Hold the pack on your face for 15 minutes, then remove it for 15 minutes. Repeat.
- Do this as often as you can for the first 6 to 8 hours after your surgery. After that, the ice or cold pack will not be helpful in reducing swelling.

If you have a lot of swelling, or it does not get better after 4 or 5 days, call your doctor.

Sutures (Stitches)

- Most sutures will dissolve and fall out on their own 3 to 10 days after surgery.
- Call us if any sutures need to be clipped and removed.

Bruising

- You will likely have bruises on your face after surgery. These occur from the surgery itself and because your lips and cheeks may have been stretched for the doctor to reach the surgery site.
- Some people have a lot of bruising after dental surgery. This does not mean anything is wrong. But, if you have bruising that concerns you, please call your doctor.
- Bruises may take several days to weeks to go away. They may travel down your neck and chest. As time passes, they will change color. This is normal.

Infection

- All wounds are at risk for becoming infected, or having any existing infection get worse.
- If your doctor has prescribed an antibiotic for you, take it exactly as directed, even if that means waking yourself up during the night to stay on schedule. Be sure to use the entire prescription, even after you start feeling better. The bacteria that caused your infection are harder to get rid of if they are allowed to regrow. They can regrow if you do not take all of your antibiotics.
- Call your doctor right away if you have:
 - A fever higher than 101°F (38.5°C)
 - Swelling that is warm to the touch and feels hard instead of puffy
 - Swelling in your throat or neck
 - Swelling that causes your eye to start to close
 - Feelings of being tired, lethargic, run down, or sick



If your doctor has prescribed an antibiotic for you, take it exactly as directed.

Diet

- Drink a lot of fluids after surgery, such as milkshakes, eggnog, water, some fruit juices, or high-protein drinks such as Ensure. Avoid fruit juice that contains acid, such as orange, grapefruit, or cranberry juice.
- Eat soup or foods that are soft and can be chewed easily, such as cottage cheese, eggs, pasta, and fish.
- Make sure you eat enough. Your body needs calories and protein to heal.

Teeth Care

- Keep your mouth as clean and free of food as you can.
- On the day after your surgery, rinse your mouth with warm salt water several times a day. Stir $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt into 8 ounces of warm water. Rinsing with salt water will help speed healing.

- You may brush and floss your teeth if you are careful to avoid your wounds. Toothpaste may sting for a few days. If it does, just dip your toothbrush in warm water and gently clean your teeth.

Medicines

- Fill any prescriptions on the day of your surgery. You will need to start taking them right away.
- Take the medicines exactly as they are prescribed.
- If you have any abnormal reactions to any of the medicines you take, call your doctor.

Facial Wounds (Lacerations)

- Clean any facial wounds by blotting them gently with clean, damp gauze. Do not scrub. Be careful of any sutures.
- Keep the wounds clean and dry to reduce scars.

Root Canal Therapy

If you had a root canal, you can expect mild to moderate pain after your first treatment. Take aspirin or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, or generic) for pain.

Splints

If you had a tooth displaced, your doctor has put a wire splint on it to keep it in position while it heals. Follow the instructions for “Teeth Care” on pages 3 and 4, and be sure to remove any food that becomes trapped in the wires. Follow a soft-food diet.

Incision and Drain

If you had an infection and swelling that needed to be drained, your doctor may have placed a rubber material in the wound to keep it open. This lets the infected liquid (pus) continue to drain.

You will be able to feel the rubber material with your lips or tongue. Leave it alone. You will need to return to the clinic for follow-up and to have the drain removed within a few days of your surgery.

Follow-up Visit

Your doctor will determine if you need a follow-up visit. If you do, staff from Advanced General Dentistry will contact you.

If you have any questions, call 206-543-1511 and ask for your doctor or the Dental Resident on call to be paged.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns.

Monday through Thursday (8:15 a.m. to 4:45 p.m.) and Friday (8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), call Advanced General Dentistry at 206-543-1511.

After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206-598-6190 and ask for your doctor or the Dental Resident on call to be paged.