After a Tooth Extraction
Caring for your mouth at home

This handout gives self-care instructions after having a tooth removed.

After a tooth is extracted (removed), you must take care of your mouth. Doing certain things, even on the first day, may help you feel better and heal faster.

What to Expect

- You may see some bruising on your face. This is normal. It will go away on its own.
- Slight oozing of blood on the first day is normal. To help control bleeding:
  - Bite firmly on the gauze placed by your surgeon. The pressure helps a blood clot form in the tooth socket (where the tooth was removed).
  - If you have a lot of bleeding, bite on a regular (black) tea bag. The tannic acid in the tea helps a blood clot form. Bite on the gauze or the tea bag until the bleeding stops.

Get Rest

Limit your activities for the first 24 hours. Rest during the day and go to bed early. When lying down, elevate your head slightly.

Pain Control

- If you have pain, take your pain medicine as prescribed.
- Do not drive while taking any pain medicine, as you may feel sleepy.
- Follow your provider's directions about all medicines.

Swelling

To reduce swelling, put a cold pack on the outside of your cheek, near where the tooth was removed. Do this for 20 minutes every hour.
Repeat as needed.

To make a cold pack:

- Put ice cubes in a plastic bag that seals at the top.
- Wrap the bag in a clean, thin towel or cloth.
- Never put ice directly on the skin.

**What to Do**

To help your mouth heal:

- **Eat soft, healthy foods and snacks,** unless your jaw is wired or banded or you are on a liquid diet.
- **Drink plenty of liquids.**
- **Brush your teeth gently.**
  - Avoid brushing around the extraction.
  - Do not use any toothpaste.
  - **Do not rinse your mouth for the first 12 hours.** Rinsing your mouth may dislodge the blood clot.
- **Keep the extraction site clean.** After 12 hours, you may gently rinse your mouth with salt water. Mix 1 teaspoon of salt in a glass of warm water and rinse. Do this rinse 4 times a day.

**What NOT to Do**

- **Do NOT drink with a straw for 1 week.** Sucking on a straw may dislodge the blood clot. After healing for 1 week, you may use a straw.
- **Do NOT drink hot liquids for 24 hours.** Hot liquids may increase swelling.
- **Limit your alcohol use.** Too much alcohol may slow healing.
- **Do NOT smoke.** Smoking may break down the blood clot. This can cause a pain.

**When to Call**

Call your healthcare provider if:

- Pain gets worse the day after your extraction.
- Bleeding is hard to control.
- Swelling around the extraction site gets worse.
- You have itching or a rash after you take medicine.