

2009

After Dental Extractions or “Wisdom Teeth” Removal

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Pain and Discomfort

After the local anaesthetic or “freezing” wears off, you will most likely feel some pain and discomfort in your jaws. This is normal and may last a few days. You may have had some pain medication prescribed for you; take it as directed. The amount of pain you have is variable and may range from none at all to more than average. Most people are somewhere in between. Remember that the pain medication will not always completely relieve the pain. Also remember, the pain may increase on the 2nd or 3rd day after the surgery before it starts to get better.

Bleeding

After the teeth have been extracted, the “holes” or tooth sockets will fill up with blood and form a “clot” or “scab” just like a cut on your skin. Every effort should be made to avoid disturbing or dislodging the clots at the extraction sites. You should avoid putting your tongue, toothbrush and rough foods near the surgical area. You should avoid sucking through a straw (the sucking action can suck the clots out of the sockets and start it bleeding). Often the extraction sockets may ooze a bit of blood for the first few hours after the surgery. If you “drool” blood, it is probably mostly saliva mixed with a bit of blood. If you do think the extraction sites are bleeding excessively, follow these steps:

- Wet two-or three 2 inch by 2 inch gauze pads and roll them up into a ball.
- Place them over the bleeding extraction socket(s).
- Bite on them firmly for 20-30 minutes thereby applying firm pressure on the socket.
- Repeat this procedure 2 - 3 times if needed.

If you have no gauze at home, you can also use the corner of a facecloth or **wet tea bags**. This will generally stop any bleeding. If this doesn't **stop** the bleeding, call the Clinic. Do not be surprised if you see a few spots of blood on your pillow the next morning.

Swelling

Swelling, at the corner of your jaw and cheeks, is normal. It will generally increase up to 2 or 3 days after the surgery before starting to decrease. Swelling can be decreased by applying ice at the corners of your jaw for the first 24 hours. A bag of ice, or frozen vegetables, wrapped in a cloth or towel can be placed on your face and jaws and held there. Generally 20 minutes on and then 20 minutes off for the first day (except when sleeping at night) helps to reduce swelling. Remember that the swelling will generally peak on the 2nd or 3rd day after the surgery.

Difficulty Swallowing and Opening Your Mouth Wide

The surgery may make it difficult to open your mouth wide for several days. Also you may have some difficulty

swallowing (in the first few hours) because of the “freezing” and (over the next several days) because of discomfort and soreness. You may or may not find that this bothers you.

Bruising

You may see some bruising develop at the corners of your jaw and run into your neck after several days. If you bruise easily, you may have more than average.

Feeling Unwell and Running a Temperature

You may feel unwell and run a mild temperature for 1-2 days after surgery. Sometimes you may feel sick to your stomach or vomit. This can be due to the pain medication, the surgery itself, and/or the sedatives used during the procedure. This will subside with time.

Hygiene

- Do not rinse your mouth for the first 24 hours after surgery. You may rinse the clots out of the sockets and start the socket(s) bleeding.
- After 24 hours, start gently rinsing with a salt water mixture (a pinch of salt in a glass of warm water) and let it fall out gently.
- As the gum incision heals, you can rinse more vigorously.
- Do not rinse for 1 week with anything other than the warm water and salt.

- You can brush your teeth after 24 hours but do not brush the area of the extraction(s) for 5-7 days.
- If you are temporarily left with some “open holes” or sockets, you may have to rinse more often to keep the sockets clean until they heal over with normal gum tissue.

Diet

- No hot food or hot liquid for 24 hours. You may drink and eat cold and soft food and liquids during the first 24 hours.
- Try to eat softer foods for the first 2-3 days (puddings, ice cream, yogurt, soups). Softer foods will not tear any stitches and will not get jammed into any open sockets.
- After the first few days, when eating tougher foods, avoid the open sockets until you find it comfortable to chew.
- Some sockets will take several weeks before the gums grow over normally. Until the sockets close over completely, you will probably get food stuck in the sockets. This may cause problems with “bad breath” and a bad taste in your mouth.

Infection

Occasionally, infection can occur after the extraction of wisdom teeth. After the initial swelling period (2-3 days), continued swelling, pain and discomfort may be an indication of infection. You may develop a fever or feel

sick. Pus may drain from the infected socket and leave a bad taste in your mouth. If this happens, call the Clinic.

Stitches

If you had stitches inserted in your gums, they will dissolve on their own in 3-8 days. You may see a few spots of blood in your saliva when this happens.

Sedation and Anaesthesia

You may have been given an intravenous sedative for your dental extractions. If so, you may or may not remember much about your procedure. Before you leave, the doctor and staff will ensure you have recovered adequately. Although you may feel awake and alert after your procedure, you may have some of the sedative drugs still in your "system". This is why you are not allowed to drive a motor vehicle or perform any dangerous tasks for 24-48 hours (for example: do not use power tools). Do not sign any documents of legal importance. You should stay home and rest quietly for at least 24 hours. You must have someone at home with you for the first 24 hours.

Smoking

If you smoke, you should try to avoid smoking until the sockets heal over. This may take 2-3 weeks. If you cannot hold off for this period, it is in your best interest to stop smoking for as long as possible after the surgery. Smoking can complicate healing or lead to infection or "dry socket".

Dry Socket

Dry socket can occur after any dental extraction. It is recognized when:

- Initial pain from surgery is better.
- Then, the pain returns to the same area.
- Socket becomes very painful.
- Pain medication does not work.
- Pain spreads to front of the jaw and/or to the ear.

Depending on how painful it is, you may have to come into the Clinic to get the socket treated with medication. Dry socket is more common in the lower jaw. It is more likely to occur in females than males, females who take birth control pills, older people and smokers.

Remember that you may have only a few or all of the symptoms described depending on the difficulty of your extraction(s).

Non Urgent Questions

Call the Oral Maxillofacial Surgery Clinic at the Victoria General Hospital - (902) 473-2070 between 8:30 am and 4:30 pm Monday to Friday.



Urgent Concerns

Call (902) 473-5238 between 8:30 am and 3:30 pm. If busy or after Clinic hours call "locating" at (902) 473-2222 and ask to have the oral surgery resident paged. Stay on the line and the resident will be with you shortly.

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