

Post-Extraction Instructions

Some discomfort, swelling and bruising is normal after a tooth extraction and usually settles within 3-7 days. There may be a small amount of bleeding or ooze from the socket for the first 24 hours.

Do NOT rinse, spit forcefully, smoke, drink through a straw or use mouthwash for the first 24 hours — this can dislodge the blood clot and delay healing.

Bite firmly on the gauze pad provided for 30-45 minutes after leaving the practice. If bleeding continues, fold a clean handkerchief or gauze into a pad, place it directly over the socket and bite down firmly for a further 20-30 minutes.

Do NOT eat or drink while you are still numb, to avoid biting your cheek, lip or tongue.

Eat soft, cool foods for the first day and chew on the opposite side to the extraction site where possible. Avoid hot food and drinks, alcohol and vigorous exercise for 24 hours.

After the first 24 hours, rinse gently with warm salty water (half a teaspoon of salt in a glass of warm water) after meals and before bed for the next few days to keep the area clean.

Continue your normal brushing routine, but be gentle around the extraction site for the first few days.

To relieve discomfort we recommend Ibuprofen 400mg every 6 hours (after food) unless you are unable to take it, in which case Paracetamol 500mg is a suitable alternative — these can be taken together if needed. Please avoid Aspirin as this can promote bleeding.

A small amount of swelling and bruising is normal and usually peaks at 2-3 days before settling. An ice pack wrapped in a towel, held against the outside of the face for 10 minutes every hour, will help reduce this in the first 24 hours.

Do NOT smoke for at least 48 hours, and ideally longer, as this significantly increases the risk of a painful dry socket and delays healing.

Dry socket: this happens when the blood clot in the socket is lost or breaks down before the area has healed, exposing the bone underneath. It typically causes a dull, throbbing pain that develops 2-4 days after the extraction, often spreading to the ear or jaw, sometimes with a bad taste or odour. It is uncomfortable but not dangerous, and is easily treated at the practice with a medicated dressing to settle the pain while the socket heals. Smoking, using a straw, and vigorous rinsing or spitting in the first 24 hours are the main avoidable causes.

If you have been given antibiotics, please complete the full course as instructed.

You should contact the practice if you experience heavy or persistent bleeding that does not settle with pressure, severe or worsening pain, significant swelling, or a temperature.

If the socket continues to bleed after you have left the practice and pressure is not controlling it, please contact the practice as soon as possible.

In the unlikely event that you cannot contact the practice out of hours and you are seriously concerned, please go directly to the nearest Hospital Accident and Emergency Department.