

After a Tooth Extraction: Caring for Your Mouth

When you've had a tooth extracted (removed), you need to take care of your mouth. Doing certain things, even on the first day, may help you feel better and heal faster.

Control Bleeding

To help control bleeding, bite firmly on the gauze placed by your dentist. The pressure helps to form a blood clot in the tooth socket. If you have a lot of bleeding, bite on a regular tea bag. The tannic acid in the tea aids in forming a blood clot. Bite on the gauze or the tea bag until the bleeding stops. Slight oozing of blood on the first day is normal.

Minimize Pain

To lessen any pain, take prescribed medication as directed. Don't drive while taking any pain medication as you may feel drowsy. Ask your dentist if you may take over-the-counter medication, if needed.

Reduce Swelling

To reduce swelling, put an ice pack on your cheek near the extraction site. You can make an ice pack by putting ice in a plastic bag and wrapping it in a thin towel. Apply the ice pack to your cheek for 10 minutes. Then, remove it for 5 minutes. Repeat as needed. You may see some bruising on your face. This is normal and will go away on its own.

Get Enough Rest

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

Do's

Below are some things to do to help your mouth heal.

Do eat a diet of soft, healthy foods and snacks. It may be easier for you to eat soft foods soon after your extraction. Also, drink plenty of liquids.

Do brush your teeth gently. Avoid brushing around the extraction. And don't use any toothpaste. Rinsing toothpaste from your mouth may dislodge the blood clot.

Do keep the extraction site clean. After 12 hours you may be able to gently rinse your mouth. Rinse 4 times a day with 1 teaspoon of salt in a glass of water. Check with your dentist first.

Don'ts

Below are some things to avoid while you're healing.

Don't drink with a straw. Sucking on a straw may dislodge the blood clot.

Don't drink hot liquids. Hot liquids may increase swelling. Limit your alcohol use. Excessive use of alcohol may slow healing.

Don't smoke. Smoking may break down the blood clot, causing a painful tooth socket.

Call Your Dentist If:

- Pain becomes more severe the day after your extraction.
- Bleeding becomes hard to control.
- Swelling around the extraction site worsens.
- Itching or rashes occur after you take medication.

CAUTION: Rinse your mouth very gently. Otherwise the blood clot may be dislodged.