

Andrew R. Glenn, DDS, MD

Surgical Instructions

After Wisdom Tooth Removal

The removal of third molars (wisdom teeth) will result in varying levels of postoperative pain and swelling. Following a few simple instructions can minimize recovery time after wisdom teeth removal, and lessen the risk of post-surgical complications.

Immediately Following Surgery

The gauze pad placed over the surgical area should be kept in place for an hour or so. After this time, the gauze pad should be removed and discarded. Repeated use of gauze often causes more bleeding, and should generally be avoided.

Gentle rinsing with warm salt water (1 cup water, 1 tsp. salt) and careful toothbrushing is permissible.

Take the prescribed pain medications as directed, ideally before the effect of local anesthetic begins to diminish.

Restrict your activities the day of wisdom teeth surgery and resume normal activity when you feel comfortable.

Place ice packs to the sides of your face where surgery was performed. Refer to the section on swelling for explanation.

Bleeding

A certain amount of bleeding is to be expected following surgery, and can last from a few minutes to a few hours. Gauze pads placed in the office should be discarded after an hour or so, and replacement is discouraged. Blood that accumulates and clots outside the surgical areas should be gently removed. Warm salt water rinse and toothbrushing is permissible, with care taken to avoid contact with tooth sockets. Excessive or persistent bleeding may be lessened with use of teabags; moisten a teabag with warm water, ring it out, and place over bleeding sockets, followed by gentle bite pressure for an hour or so. If bleeding does not subside, call for further instructions.

Swelling

The swelling that is normally expected is usually proportional to the surgery involved. Swelling around the mouth, cheeks, and sides of the face is not uncommon. This is the body's normal reaction to surgery and eventual repair. The swelling will not become apparent until the day following surgery and will not reach its maximum until 2-3 days after. However, the swelling may be minimized by the immediate use of ice packs, as well as keeping the head elevated while resting. Ice packs or bags of frozen peas/corn should be applied to the sides of the face where surgery was performed. The ice packs should be left on continuously while you are

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awake, alternating sides every 20-30 minutes. After 36 hours, ice has no beneficial effect. If swelling or jaw stiffness has persisted for several days, there is no cause for alarm. This is a normal reaction to surgery. Thirty-six hours following surgery, the application of moist heat to the sides of the face is beneficial in reducing the size of the swelling.

Pain

For moderate pain, a scheduled dose of an anti-inflammatory medication is recommended, typically Ibuprofen 600mg, four times daily.

For severe pain, take the additional prescribed medication (Vicodin/Hydrocodone, Ultram/Tramadol) as directed, with some food. The prescribed pain medicine may make you groggy and will slow down your reflexes. Do not drive an automobile or work around machinery. Avoid alcoholic beverages. Pain (like swelling) typically worsens over the first 2-3 days before subsiding. If pain persists, it may require attention and you should call the office.

Diet

After general anesthetic or I.V. sedation, liquids should be initially taken. Straws are permissible with clear liquids. If you had lower wisdom teeth removed, avoid food with small particles, and eat "strained" foods. You should prevent dehydration by taking fluids regularly. Your food intake will be limited for the first few days. You should compensate for this by increasing your fluid intake. You will feel better, have more strength, less discomfort and heal faster if you maintain good nutrition. Caution: If you suddenly sit up or stand from a lying position you may become dizzy. If you are lying down following surgery, make sure you sit for one minute before standing.

Keep the mouth clean

Gentle rinsing and toothbrushing is permissible the day of surgery, so long as care is taken to avoid excessive contact with the surgical areas. The day after surgery you should begin rinsing several times a day especially after eating, with a cup of warm water mixed with a teaspoon of salt. Use the syringe provided to irrigate lower sockets (warm water/salt) as soon as you're able to consume regular food and are able to see the sockets well enough to irrigate. Continue irrigation of the lower sockets for 4-6 weeks, or until you're no longer having food impaction. If you're unable to find the sockets to irrigate after several days, please call our office.

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Discoloration

In some cases, discoloration of the skin (bruising) follows swelling. The development of blue, green, or yellow discoloration is due to blood spreading beneath the tissues. This is a normal post-operative occurrence, which may occur 2-3 days post-operatively. Moist heat applied to the area may speed up the removal of the discoloration.

Nausea and Vomiting

In the event of nausea and/or vomiting following surgery, do not take anything by mouth for at least an hour including the prescribed medicine. Start slowly, with small doses of clear liquids. You should sip slowly over a fifteen-minute period. When the nausea subsides you can begin taking solid foods and the prescribed medicine.

Other Complications

- If numbness of the lip, chin, or tongue occurs there is no cause for alarm. Up to 12 hours of local anesthesia is normal. You should be aware that if your lip or tongue is numb, you could bite it and not feel the sensation. So be careful. Call our office if you have any questions.
- Slight elevation of temperature immediately following surgery is not uncommon. If the temperature persists, notify the office. Ibuprofen may be taken to reduce the fever.
- Occasionally, patients may feel hard projections in the mouth with their tongue. They are not roots, they are the bony walls which supported the tooth. These projections usually smooth out spontaneously, or exfoliate on their own. If not, they can be removed by Dr. Glenn.
- If the corners of your mouth are stretched, they may dry out and crack. Your lips should be kept moist with an ointment such as vaseline.
- Stiffness (Trismus) of the jaw muscles may cause difficulty in opening your mouth for a few days following surgery. This is a normal post-operative event which will resolve in time.
- Please call the office with any fevers (101F oral), difficulty swallowing or prolonged inability to open the mouth.

Finally

No two mouths are alike, and the healing process can vary from person to person. Call our office with any questions!

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