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Post Operative Home Care Instructions

Please Read Carefully

Sometimes the after-effects of oral surgery are quite minimal, so not all of the instructions may apply. Common sense will often dictate what you should do. However, when in doubt follow these guidelines or call our office for clarification.

DAY OF SURGERY

FIRST HOUR: Bite down gently but firmly on the gauze packs that have been placed over the surgical areas, making sure they remain in place. Do not change them for 30 minutes unless the bleeding is controlled. The packs may be gently removed after 30 minutes. If active bleeding persists, place enough new gauze to obtain pressure over the surgical site for another 30 minutes. The gauze may then be changed as necessary (typically every 30 to 45 minutes). It is best to moisten the gauze with tap water and loosely fluff for more comfortable positioning.

EXERCISE CARE: Do not disturb the surgical area today. Do NOT rinse vigorously, spit, suck on a straw or probe the area with any objects. You may brush your teeth gently. PLEASE DO NOT SMOKE FOR 5-7 DAYS AFTER SURGERY, since this is very detrimental to healing and may cause intense pain and prolong healing. DO NOT drive, operate machinery, use alcohol or sign legal and binding documents while taking pain medications. Physical activity, spitting, smoking, and bending over prolong bleeding and delay healing. Rest in a semi-reclining position (keep a couple of pillows behind the head or rest in a recliner). If the patient is moving from a lying position, have the patient sit for a few minutes and then stand to keep the patient from feeling faint or light-headed.

OOZING: Intermittent bleeding or oozing overnight is normal. Bleeding may be controlled by placing fresh gauze over the areas and biting on the gauze for 30-45 minutes at a time.

PERSISTENT BLEEDING: Bleeding should never be severe. If so, it usually means that the packs are being clenched between the teeth only and are not exerting pressure on the surgical areas. Try repositioning the packs. If bleeding persists or becomes heavy you may substitute a tea bag (soaked in very hot water, squeezed damp-dry and wrapped in moist gauze) for 20 to 30 minutes.

SWELLING: Swelling is often associated with oral surgery. It can be minimized by using a cold pack, ice bag or a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a towel and applied firmly to the cheek adjacent to the surgical area. This should be applied twenty minutes on and twenty minutes off during the first 24 hours after surgery.

NAUSEA: Nausea is not uncommon after surgery. Sometimes pain medications are the cause. Nausea can be reduced by preceding each pain pill with a small amount of soft food, and taking the pill with a larger volume of water. Try to keep taking clear fluids and minimize dosing of pain medications.

PAIN: Unfortunately most oral surgery is accompanied by discomfort and a low grade fever. If you have been given a prescription for pain medication, you should take the first pill before the anesthetic has worn off. This will help to manage the discomfort. The effects of pain medications vary widely among individuals. If you do not achieve adequate relief at first, you may supplement with Extra Strength Tylenol. Some patients may even require two of the pain pills at the same time. Remember that the most severe pain is usually within 6 hours after the local anesthetic wears off; after that your need for medicine should lessen. If you have stitches, they will dissolve and or come out on their own in 3-7 days.

DIET: Eat any nourishing food that can be taken with comfort. Avoid extremely hot foods. It is sometimes advisable, but not absolutely required, to confine the first few days intake to liquids and pureed foods (soups, broth, gelatin, oatmeal or cream of wheat). Refrain from eating milk products and drinking caffeine for the first 24 hours after surgery because they tend to lead to nausea. Avoid foods like nuts, sunflower seeds, popcorn, etc., which may get lodged in the socket areas. Over the next several days you may gradually progress to solid foods. It is important not to skip meals! If you take nourishment regularly you will feel better, gain strength, have less discomfort and heal faster. If you are a diabetic, maintain your normal eating habits or follow instructions given by your doctor.

SHARP EDGES: If you feel something hard or sharp edges in the surgical areas, it is likely you are feeling the bony walls which once supported the extracted teeth. Occasionally small slivers of bone may work themselves out during the following week or so.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE SECOND AND THIRD DAYS

MOUTH RINSES: Keeping your mouth clean after surgery is essential. Use ¼ teaspoon of salt dissolved in an 8 oz glass of warm water and gently rinse with portions of the solution, taking 5 minutes to use the entire glassful. Repeat as often as you like, but at least, 2-3 times a day.

BRUSHING: Begin your normal oral hygiene as soon as possible after surgery. Make the best attempt within the realms of comfort to keep your teeth clean.

HOT APPLICATIONS: You may apply warm compresses to the skin over the areas of swelling (hot water bottle, hot moist towels, heating pad) for 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off to help soothe tender areas. This will also help decrease swelling and stiffness.

HEALING: Normal healing after tooth extraction should be as follows: The first two days after surgery are generally the most uncomfortable and there is usually some swelling. On the third day you should be more comfortable and, although still swollen, can usually begin a more substantial diet. **The remainder of the post-operative course should be gradual, steady improvement.**

It is our desire that your recovery be as smooth and pleasant as possible. Following these instructions will assist you, but if you have any questions, please call the office.

PLEASE NOTE: Telephone calls for narcotic (pain killer) prescription renewals are ONLY accepted during office hours.