

Post-Operative Care Instructions

Thank you for choosing our office for your care. Proper post-operative care is essential for a smooth recovery after oral, periodontal, or implant surgery.

Following these instructions can help reduce discomfort, prevent complications, and promote faster healing. Depending on individual situations, your doctor may give you additional specific guidelines.

While you may come across different recommendations online or from friends and family, the guidelines below are based on our experience treating thousands of patients.

Please use good judgment and contact our office if you have any concerns during your recovery.

Bleeding & Bruising

What is Normal?

Slight bleeding is normal for several hours after surgery. You may notice streaks of blood when rinsing or spitting.

If Bleeding Continues

1. Moisten a piece of gauze and place it directly over the surgical site.
2. Apply gentle but firm pressure for **20 to 30 minutes**.
3. Remove and check the area.

You may also use a moistened tea bag chilled in ice water. Tea contains tannic acid, which may help stabilize the blood clot.

Repeat every 1 to 2 hours as needed.

When to Call Us

Intermittent oozing for several days can be normal. However, if bleeding remains heavy or does not improve after repeated pressure, please contact our office.

Bruising

Depending on the nature of the procedure, your blood chemistry, and medications you're taking, bruising and discoloration may appear for **3 to 5 days** after surgery. This is a normal response and should gradually fade.

Discomfort & Pain Management

Some soreness, aching, throbbing, and tenderness at the injection sites are normal after surgery.

Medications

If prescription medications were provided, take them exactly as directed.

If you take other prescription medications and are unsure about possible interactions, contact the prescribing physician.

Over-the-Counter Pain Relief

Ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®) is generally recommended unless you have allergies or medical conditions that prevent its use.

Typical dosing:

- **800 mg every 8 hours**, or
- **600 mg every 6 hours**

Most tablets contain 200 mg or 400 mg, so adjust accordingly.

Alternating with Acetaminophen (Tylenol®)

Acetaminophen can be taken between ibuprofen doses for additional relief.

Example:

- 8:00 AM: Ibuprofen
- 11:00 AM: Acetaminophen
- 2:00 PM: Ibuprofen
- 5:00 PM: Acetaminophen

Important Notes

- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Use caution when combining medications.
- Ibuprofen may increase the blood-thinning effect of aspirin.
- Naproxen (Aleve®) may be used instead of ibuprofen if preferred.

Swelling

Some swelling is expected and often peaks during the first **48 hours** after surgery.

Most swelling begins to improve by the third day.

Ice Therapy (First 24 Hours)

Apply a cold pack to the outside of the face:

- 10 to 15 minutes on
- 10 to 15 minutes off

Heat Therapy (Days 2-3)

Apply a warm, moist compress to the outside of the face to help reduce swelling and improve circulation.

Eating & Drinking

Before Eating

Do not eat until the numbness has completely worn off. This helps prevent accidental biting or burning of your lips, cheeks, or tongue.

During the First Week

- Eat soft foods when possible.
- Cut food into small pieces.
- Chew on the side opposite the surgical area.
- Avoid hard, crunchy, or small foods, including:
 - Popcorn
 - Nuts
 - Chips
 - Granola
 - Pretzels
 - Seeds

Also Avoid

- Chewing gum as it may accidentally stick to any sutures or graft material.
- Vigorous spitting
- Forceful rinsing for the first 3 days

These activities can disturb the blood clot and delay healing.

Oral Hygiene

Brushing

Do NOT brush the surgical area until instructed.

This is usually:

- 3 to 4 days for most procedures
- Up to 2 weeks for some grafting procedures

You may continue brushing and flossing the rest of your mouth normally.

Rinsing

Gentle rinsing is usually safe immediately after surgery using:

- Prescribed mouth rinse
- Warm salt water
- Plain water

Rinse at least **3 times daily**, especially after meals.

Important

- Spit gently after rinsing.
 - Keeping the area clean helps it heal faster.
 - If you received a bone graft, **avoid alcohol-containing rinses such as Listerine®**. Use a non-alcoholic rinse instead.
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Numbness

Rarely, temporary irritation or swelling around a nerve may cause numbness of the lip, chin, teeth, or gums.

This usually improves over time and is rarely permanent.

Please contact us if numbness persists.

Antibiotics

If prescribed antibiotics:

- Take every dose exactly as directed.
- Complete the full course, even if you begin feeling better.
- Drink plenty of fluids.

Contact Us Immediately If You Experience:

- Severe diarrhea
- Itching
- Rash
- Redness
- Swelling elsewhere on the body

These may be signs of an allergic reaction.

Physical Activity

For the first **2 to 3 days**, avoid strenuous activity that increases blood pressure, including:

- Heavy lifting
- Running
- Intense exercise
- Weight training

Increased blood flow can disturb the healing clot and cause renewed bleeding.

For One Week

Avoid:

- Contact sports
- Playing wind instruments

Resume normal activities as soon as you feel comfortable.

Stitches

Some stitches dissolve on their own, while others require removal.

It is common for stitches to loosen or unravel after about a week. In most cases, this is harmless and does not affect healing.

Hematoma (Blood Collection Under the Tissue)

Occasionally, blood may collect beneath the gums and cheeks, creating a firm, tender swelling called a hematoma.

Symptoms

- Firm lump
- Pressure or soreness
- Swelling

Treatment

- Warm compresses
- Gentle massage

Most hematomas resolve within **10 to 14 days**.

Please contact our office if you believe you have developed a hematoma.

Follow-Up Visits

You may be scheduled for a follow-up appointment so we can monitor your healing.

Until then:

- Maintain a healthy diet
 - Follow oral hygiene instructions carefully
 - Contact us with any concerns
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Procedure-Specific Instructions

Laser / Periodontal Treatment

- Normal eating and brushing usually resume after **3 to 4 days**.
- Begin brushing gently.
- Mild bleeding and tenderness may occur when brushing resumes.

Some patients experience increased tooth sensitivity to cold or air. This can last from a few days to several months and is often a sign that inflammation is resolving.

Soft Tissue Grafts

Soft tissue grafts require extra care.

For at least **2 weeks**:

- Do not brush or floss the treated area.
- Be very careful when eating.

Follow all additional instructions provided by our office.

Dental Implants

Significant or worsening pain is **not normal** after implant surgery.

Please contact us if you experience:

- Sharp or shooting pain lasting more than 2 to 3 days
- Pain that wakes you from sleep
- Pain not relieved by recommended medications

These symptoms may indicate a healing problem.

Tooth Extractions

Dry Socket

A dry socket is an uncommon complication that usually occurs **3 to 5 days** after an extraction.

Signs of Dry Socket

- Sudden increase in pain
- Sharp, severe pain
- Pain that becomes worse instead of better

If you experience these symptoms, call our office immediately.

Crown Lengthening

After crown lengthening:

- Food may temporarily collect between the teeth more easily.
- This is expected and temporary.
- A future crown or restoration will typically close these spaces.

Avoid brushing and flossing the area for approximately **3 days**, unless instructed otherwise.

Keeping the area clean is essential to prevent delays in your restorative treatment.

Sinus Grafting Procedures

For approximately **2 weeks**, avoid activities that create pressure changes in the sinuses.

Important Precautions

- Sneeze with your mouth open.
- Avoid blowing your nose forcefully.
- Avoid drinking through straws.
- Avoid flying when possible.
- Minimize heavy lifting.

Some nasal bleeding is normal.

Contact Us Immediately If You Experience

- Difficulty breathing

- Fever
 - Excessive bleeding
 - Any unusual symptoms
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When to Contact Our Office

Please call us if you experience:

- Heavy or uncontrolled bleeding
- Severe swelling that continues to worsen
- Persistent numbness
- Signs of an allergic reaction
- Severe diarrhea while taking antibiotics
- Sharp or increasing pain after implant placement
- Symptoms of dry socket
- Difficulty breathing, fever, or any unusual concerns

When in doubt, call us. We are always happy to help ensure your recovery stays on track.