

POST-EXTRACTION ADVICE LEAFLET

Immediately after your extraction or surgical procedure:

- Avoid eating, drinking, smoking or rinsing your mouth.
- Avoid touching the hole or operation site with your tongue, finger or other objects and avoid sucking the hole.

For the rest of the day:

- Make sure that you eat and drink but avoid hot food or drinks until the anaesthetic wears off. This is important as you cannot feel pain properly and may burn or scald your mouth.
- Do not be tempted to rinse the area for the first 16 hours. It is important to allow the socket to heal, and you must be careful not to damage the blood clot by eating on that side or letting your tongue disturb it, as this can allow infection into the socket and affect healing.
- Take it easy for the rest of the day. Take as little exercise as you can, and rest as much as you can. Do not take part in vigorous exercise or active sports as this may start the bleeding again.
- The numbness will last for 2 - 4 hours so take care not to bite your tongue, lip or cheek during this time. Keep small children under observation until all the numbness has gone.
- Keep your head up to avoid any bleeding. Try to keep your head higher for the first night using an extra pillow. It is also a good idea to use an old pillowcase, or put a towel on the pillow, in case you bleed a little.

The next day:

- Start hot salt mouthwashes. Dissolve a teaspoonful of salt in half a tumbler of warm water (not too hot). Take a mouthful and hold it over the site of the extraction or operation. Finish all the mouth rinse and repeat this as often as possible but at least after every meal and before bed. Do this for at least a week (or as long as your dentist tells you) as it will help to keep the area clean.

What to do if it bleeds:

- The first thing to remember is that there may be some slight bleeding for the first day or so. Many people are concerned about the amount of bleeding. This is due to the fact that a small amount of blood is mixed with a larger amount of saliva, which looks more dramatic than it is.
- If bleeding persists, do not rinse out, but apply pressure to the socket. Bite down firmly on a rolled clean cotton handkerchief (do not use paper tissues) for 20 minutes whilst sitting upright. Make sure this is placed directly over the extraction site and that the pad is replaced if necessary.
- If the bleeding has not stopped after an hour or two, contact your dentist.

Advice on consumption of Alcohol and Smoking:

- Avoid alcohol for at least 24 hours as this can encourage bleeding and delay healing.
- It is important not to do anything that will increase your blood pressure as this can lead to further bleeding. We recommend that you avoid smoking for as long as you can after an extraction, but this should be at least for the rest of the day.

Cirencester Dental Implant Practice

The Old Post Office, 12 Castle Street, Cirencester, GL7 1QA Tel: 01285 640248 Fax: 01285 640258
www.thedentalimplantpractice.com Email: reception@cirencesterdentalpractice.com

Is there anything I can do to help my mouth?

- Different people heal at different speeds after an extraction. It is important to keep your mouth and the extraction site as clean as possible, making sure that the socket is kept clear of all food and debris. Don't rinse for the first 24 hours, and this will help your mouth to start healing. After this time start using hot salt mouthwashes.
- It is important to keep a healthy diet; and take a Vitamin C supplement, which will help your mouth to heal.

I am in pain, what should I take?

- There will usually be some tenderness in the area for the first few days, and in most cases some simple pain relief is enough to ease the discomfort. What you would normally take for a headache should be enough. However, always follow the manufacturer's instructions and if in doubt check with your doctor first. Do not take aspirin, as this will make your mouth bleed.

Are there any medicines I should avoid?

- As we have said, it is important not to use anything containing aspirin as this can cause further bleeding. This happens because aspirin can thin the blood slightly. Asthma sufferers should avoid Ibuprofen-based pain relief. Again check with your chemist or dentist if you are worried or feel you need something stronger.

I am still in pain, what could it be?

- Sometimes an infection can get in the socket, which can be very painful. This is where there is little or no blood clot in the tooth socket and the bony socket walls are exposed and become infected. This is called dry socket and in some cases is worse than the original toothache! In this case, it is important to see your dentist, who may place a dressing in the socket and prescribe a course of antibiotics to help relieve the infection. You may also feel the sharp edge of the socket with your tongue and sometimes small pieces of bone may work their way to the surface of the socket. This is perfectly normal.

Will my dentist need to see me again?

- Your mouth may swell a little and this is quite normal after an extraction or operation. If the swelling is excessive or lasts longer than 2-3 days, please contact your dentist.
- If it has been a particularly difficult extraction, the dentist will give you a follow-up appointment. This could be to remove any stitches that were needed, or simply to check the area is healing well.
- Your dentist will also want to discuss the options available to you for replacing your lost tooth.

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