



(Additional instructions are available on the website.)

## **INSTRUCTIONS FOR DAY OF SURGERY**

**EXERCISE CAUTION:** Do not disturb the surgical area today other than placing gauze packs as needed. Do not rinse vigorously today. You may brush your teeth gently before bed. Do not smoke for at least 72 hours, since this is very detrimental to healing and may cause a dry socket.

**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. The packs may be gently removed after 30 minutes and the sites examined. There will likely still be some bleeding. If so, place enough new gauze (fold in half and then in half again) to obtain pressure over the surgical site for another 30 minutes. It is best to lightly moisten the gauze with tap water and loosely fluff for more comfortable positioning.

**OOZING:** Please note that it is not uncommon for oozing to persist for several hours, and sometimes more, after surgery. If you are unable to remove the gauze and tolerate minor oozing within a few hours, follow the instructions below or please call for further instructions. Intermittent bleeding or oozing overnight is normal. Do not sleep with gauze in the mouth overnight due to the risk of swallowing the gauze. This will also continue to disturb the clot in your sleep and promote more bleeding. New bleeding may be controlled by placing fresh gauze over the areas and biting on the gauze for 30 minutes at a time.

**PERSISTENT BLEEDING:** Bleeding should never be severe (mouth quickly filling with blood.) If so, it usually means that the packs are being clenched between teeth only and are not exerting pressure on the surgical areas. Gently wipe off any visible clot hanging from the surgery site and try repositioning the gauze. If bleeding still persists or becomes heavy, soak the gauze in ice water, gently ring, and immediately place over the surgical site, and apply firm pressure. Do not disturb for 30 minutes, then repeat. You may also substitute a tea bag (soaked in water, squeezed damp-dry and wrapped in a moist gauze) for 30 minutes. If bleeding remains uncontrolled, please call our office.

**SWELLING:** Significant 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. It will take 72 hours for your swelling to reach its peak, so do not be alarmed. (Ice packs will only be beneficial in the first 24 hours.)

**PAIN:** Unfortunately most oral surgery is accompanied by some degree of discomfort. You will usually have a prescription for pain medication. If you take the first pill before the anesthetic has worn off, you should be better able to manage your discomfort. The effects of pain medications vary widely among individuals. Do not expect to have complete relief of your pain from the medication. If you do not achieve adequate relief at first, you may supplement each pain pill with an analgesic such as Tylenol or Motrin. Some patients may even require two of the prescribed pain pills at one time. Remember that the most severe pain is usually within six hours after the local anesthetic wears off. After that, your need for pain medicine should gradually lessen. If you find you are taking large amounts of pain medicine at frequent intervals, please call our office.

**NAUSEA:** Nausea is not uncommon after surgery. Sometimes pain medications or antibiotics 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 large volume of water. Try to keep taking clear fluids and minimize dosing of pain medications, but call us if you do not feel better. A carbonated beverage may help with nausea.

**DIET:** Eat any nourishing food that can be taken with comfort. Avoid extremely hot foods. Do not use a straw for the first few days after surgery. It is sometimes advisable, but not absolutely required, to confine the first day's intake to cold liquids or pureed foods (puddings, yogurt, milk shakes, cottage cheese, etc.) It is best to 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. 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 (and not a portion of tooth left behind.) Occasionally, small slivers of bone may work themselves out after surgery.

**SUTURES:** Usually, sutures (stitches) are used that will dissolve and be lost on their own within 3-7 days. Do not be alarmed if a suture is lost earlier or even on the day of surgery. They rarely require replacement unless bleeding cannot be controlled.

### **INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE SECOND AND THIRD DAYS**

**MOUTH RINSES:** Keeping your mouth clean after surgery is essential. Use 1/4 teaspoon of salt dissolved in an 8 ounce glass of warm water and gently rinse with portions of the solution, taking five minutes to use the entire glassful. Repeat as often as you like, but at least three times daily. It is best to rinse immediately after meals to cleanse the wounds of food. If you are given a plastic irrigating syringe, do not use it for the first five days after surgery. Thereafter, use it three times a day to gently rinse the sockets with plain water. You should continue to do this until you notice food no longer lodges in the sockets. This is usually required only after the removal of impacted wisdom teeth.

**BRUSHING:** Begin your normal oral hygiene the day after surgery. Soreness and swelling may not permit vigorous brushing, but please make every effort to clean your teeth within the bounds of comfort. Failing to brush your teeth near the extraction sites will greatly increase your chance of infection. You will often see slight oozing from the surgical sites after brushing and rinsing for a few days.

**WARM COMPRESSES:** The day after surgery, 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 the stiffness of the jaw, which can last for a week or two.

**HEALING:** 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. Holes at the extraction sites are completely normal as tight closure is usually not possible or necessary. These will slowly heal over many weeks to months.

**QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS:** Most questions can be answered by calling the office during normal business hours. Dr. Burton may be reached after hours and on weekends, at any time, for true emergencies such as uncontrolled bleeding or reactions to medication. Please limit nonurgent calls before 9pm on weekdays and 5pm on weekends, if possible. If you call the answering service, please pay close attention to the prompts. If the doctor does not answer, he will return your call as soon as he can. If your call is not returned within 30 minutes, it is important that you call again. Only calls pertaining to recent postsurgical complications will be returned after hours. Otherwise, they will be returned on the next business day. If you need a refill on medications, please have a number for a pharmacy ready and check to be sure it is open before calling the doctor.

**PHONE NUMBERS:** During Office Hours (M/Tu/Th 7:30-5:00, W/F 7:30-3:00): call (618) 519-9363

Office Closed/Emergencies Only: Answering Service call (815) 242-7171