

Oral and maxillofacial surgical procedures can be complex, requiring the incision of tissues, sectioning of teeth and removal of overlying bone. As a result, it is normal to encounter certain postoperative responses. These reactions are generally predictable, but can be unique to each patient. The following information is provided to explain some of the responses which you can normally expect.

Discomfort following the removal of a tooth will be the most severe within the first 24 hours after the operation. You must take the medication exactly as instructed. Take the anti-discomfort pills **before** the local anesthesia wears off and before you feel any discomfort. It is advisable to swallow the pills with food, milkshake, or other liquid to coat the stomach. Stop taking the medication as soon as possible because they can cause nausea. Do not drink, drive, or work if you are taking the pills, and do not stop taking the antibiotic until the bottle is empty (usually 5 - 7 days). If the patient has been given a general anesthetic or is taking a narcotic medication, that patient should be assisted for 24 hours after surgery when walking or standing. Be aware that antibiotics can interfere with the effectiveness of birth control pills.

When you get home, remove the gauze. Replace it only if the bleeding becomes heavy. Some oozing is to be expected for the first 24 hours. Spitting should be avoided. If **bleeding** seems excessive, roll up a piece of gauze into a hard ball the size of a walnut, place over the socket so it applies pressure on the cheek side (that is where the incisions are made) and bite down. The pressure will slow down the bleeding.

Do not rinse mouth for the first 24 hours. Then $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt in a glass of warm water should be used every 3 hours to rinse the mouth for a few days. If there is a history of high blood pressure, use warm water only. Do not neglect your hygiene. Brush your teeth as usual after the first postoperative 24 hours.

Swelling will develop soon after surgery and will reach maximum in about 3 days. Swelling will begin to diminish about the third day, but may take as long as one to two weeks to disappear completely. To minimize swelling, apply ice-cold applications to the side of the face 30 minutes on 30 minutes off, the day of surgery, until bedtime.

The **diet** should be soft and cool the first day (scrambled eggs, milkshakes, cooled soup, Jello, etc.). Drinking liquids is beneficial but do not vigorously rinse, use a straw or smoke postoperatively after the surgery. After the first day, a normal diet may be taken.

Discoloration of the skin will occasionally be noted adjacent to the area of surgery, and extending onto the face and neck. This is not a bruise. It is caused by oozing of the blood into the tissue. There is no need to be alarmed by such discoloration. It will gradually disappear in 7 - 10 days.

Numbness or tingling of the lower lip may sometimes develop after removal of an impacted lower molar because of the proximity of the roots to the main nerve supplying the teeth and lip. This is usually a temporary condition which will gradually disappear as the nerve begins to respond and may take as long as several months to occur.

Small sharp bone **fragments** may work up to the surface during the healing period. Should this occur, it is advisable to return to the office for their removal.

Your doctor and his staff have done everything possible to provide you with the best in anesthetic and surgical care. However, the ultimate success of your operation now depends on correct postoperative management. You have been given specific written and verbal instructions for proper home care. Be sure to follow these instructions carefully. Only in this way will you avoid the complications which can lead to unnecessary discomfort and delayed recovery. Should any undue reactions or complications arise, notify our office immediately.