

Patient Home Care Following an Extraction

After an extraction, it's important for a blood clot to form to stop the bleeding and begin the healing process. That's why your dentist may ask you to bite on a gauze pad for 30 to 45 minutes after an extraction. If bleeding or oozing continues after you remove the gauze pad, place another gauze pad on the area and bite firmly for another 30 minutes. You may have to do this several times.

After the blood clot forms, it's important to protect it, especially for the next 24 hours. It's important to not:

- smoke
- suck through a straw
- rinse your mouth vigorously
- clean the teeth next to the extraction site

These activities could dislodge the clot and slow down healing.

Limit yourself to calm activities for the first 24 hours. This keeps your blood pressure lower, reduces bleeding, and helps the healing process.

After the tooth is extracted, you may feel some pain and have some swelling. You can use an ice bag (20 minutes on, 20 minutes off) to keep this to a minimum. The swelling usually starts to go down after 48 hours.

To control discomfort, take pain medication as recommended. Don't take medication on an empty stomach or nausea may result. If antibiotics are prescribed, continue to take them for the indicated length of time, even if all symptoms and signs of infection are gone. Also:

- Drink lots of fluids.
- Eat only soft, nutritious foods on the day of the extraction.
- Don't use alcoholic beverages.
- Avoid hot and spicy foods. Also avoid foods with small seeds, nuts, popcorn.

You can begin eating normally the next day, or if not by then, as soon as it's comfortable. Gently rinse your mouth with warm salt water three times a day (put a teaspoon of salt in a cup of warm water, and then gently rinse, swish, and spit). Also, rinse gently after meals. This helps keep food out of the extraction site.

It's very important to resume your normal dental routine after 24 hours. This should include brushing your teeth and tongue and flossing at least once a day. This will speed healing and help keep your breath and mouth fresh. Call your dental office right away if you have heavy bleeding, severe pain, continued swelling after two or three days, or a reaction to the medication. After a few days, you'll be feeling fine and can resume your normal activities.