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Post-Op Instructions After Oral Surgery Procedures

Surgical Instructions for Home Care After Oral Surgery

Post-operative care is very important. Unnecessary pain and the complications of infection and swelling can be minimized if the instructions are followed carefully.

Bleeding

A certain amount of bleeding is to be expected following surgery. Slight bleeding, oozing, or redness in the saliva is not uncommon. Excessive bleeding may be controlled by first rinsing or wiping any old clots from your mouth, then placing a gauze pad over the area and biting firmly for thirty minutes. Repeat if necessary. If bleeding continues, bite on a moistened, squeeze dried tea bag for sixty minutes, repeat as necessary. The tannic acid in the dry tea bag helps to form a clot by contracting bleeding vessels. To minimize further bleeding, do not become excited, sit upright, and avoid exercise. If bleeding does not subside, call for further instructions.

Swelling

The swelling that is normally expected is usually proportional to the surgery involved. Swelling around the mouth, cheeks, eyes and sides of the face is not uncommon. This is the body's normal reaction to surgery and eventual repair. The swelling will not become apparent until the day following surgery and will not reach its maximum until 2-3 days post-operatively. However, the swelling may be minimized by the immediate use of ice packs. Two baggies filled with ice, or ice packs should be applied to the sides of the face where surgery was performed. The ice packs should be left on continuously while you are awake. After 24 hours, ice has no beneficial effect. If swelling or jaw stiffness has persisted for several days, there is no cause for alarm. This is a normal reaction to surgery. Thirty-six hours following surgery, the application of moist heat to the sides of the face is beneficial in reducing the size of the swelling

Pain

For moderate pain — Tylenol 500mg, 2 pills every 6 hours, Motrin 200 mg, 2 pills every 4-6 hours or Aleve (Naproxen Sodium) 225mg, 2 pills every 8-12 hours.

For severe pain, take the narcotic prescribed as directed. The narcotic pain medicine will make you drowsy and will slow down your reflexes. Do not drive an automobile or work around

machinery. Avoid alcoholic beverages. Pain or discomfort following surgery should subside more and more every day. If pain persists, it may require attention and you should call our office.

Keep the mouth clean

No rinsing or spitting of any kind should be performed until the day following surgery. You can brush your teeth the night of surgery but rinse gently. The day after surgery you should begin rinsing at least 5-6 times a day especially after eating with a cup of warm water mixed with a teaspoon of salt.

Discoloration

In some cases, discoloration of the skin follows swelling. The development of black, blue, green, or yellow discoloration is due to blood spreading beneath the tissues. This is a normal post-operative occurrence, which may occur 2-3 days post-operatively. Moist heat applied to the area may speed up the removal of the discoloration.

Antibiotics

If you have been placed on antibiotics, take the tablets or liquid as directed. Antibiotics will be given to help prevent infection. Discontinue antibiotic use in the event of a rash or other unfavorable reaction. Call our office if you have any questions.

Other Issues

If numbness of the lip, chin, or tongue occurs there is no cause for alarm. As stated, before surgery, this is usually temporary in nature. You should be aware that if your lip or tongue is numb, you could bite it and not feel the sensation. So be careful. Contact our office if you have any questions.

Slight elevation of temperature immediately following surgery is not uncommon. If the temperature persists, notify the office. Tylenol or ibuprofen should be taken to reduce the fever.

Occasionally, patients may feel hard projections in the mouth with their tongue. They are not roots; they are the bony walls which support the tooth. These projections usually smooth out spontaneously. If not, they can be removed by our doctors.

If the corners of your mouth are stretched, they may dry out and crack. Your lips should be kept moist with an ointment such as Vaseline.

Sore throats and pain when swallowing is not uncommon. The muscles get swollen. The normal act of swallowing can then become painful. This will subside in 2-3 days.

Stiffness (Trismus) of the jaw muscles may cause difficulty in opening your mouth for a few days following surgery. This is a normal post-operative event which will resolve in time.

Additional Information

Sutures are sometimes placed on the area of surgery to minimize post-operative bleeding and to promote healing. Sometimes they become dislodged, this is no cause for alarm. Just remove the suture from your mouth and discard it. The sutures will be removed approximately one week after surgery. The removal of sutures requires no anesthesia or needles. It takes only a minute or so, and there is no discomfort associated with this procedure. So, it's really nothing to worry about.

The pain and swelling should subside more and more each day following surgery. If your post-operative pain or swelling worsens or unusual symptoms occur, call our office for instructions. There will be a cavity where the tooth was removed. The cavity will gradually over the next month fill in with the new tissue. In the meantime, the area should be kept clean especially after meals with salt water rinses or a toothbrush.

Your case is individual, no two mouths are alike. Do not accept well intended advice from friends. Discuss your problem with the person best able to effectively help you: Dr. Bencivengo or Dr. Ko.

Brushing your teeth is okay — just be gentle at the surgical sites.

A dry socket is when the blood clot dissolves prematurely from the tooth socket. Symptoms of pain at the surgical site and even pain to the ear may occur 2-3 days following surgery. Pain should not increase with time. Call the office if this occurs.

If you are involved in regular exercise, be aware that your normal nourishment intake is reduced. Exercise may weaken you. If you get light headed, stop exercising.