

Instructions for Home Care Following the Extraction (Removal) of a Tooth

- The initial healing period after an extraction is one-to-two weeks, and you'll likely experience some swelling for the first 24 hours.
- Before the procedure, you were given an anesthetic to ensure your comfort. This anesthetic typically leaves your lips, teeth and tongue feeling numb. For this reason, avoid chewing for two hours following surgery, or until the numbness has completely worn off.
- Some discomfort after the extraction is normal. An over-the-counter pain reliever, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen, is usually sufficient. We can also give you a prescription for a stronger pain reliever, if needed.
- You can also decrease pain and swelling by applying an ice pack – 20 minutes on, 20 minutes off – for the first six hours following the extraction.
- A blood clot will form on the extraction site, and this clot is vital to the healing process. To keep the clot intact, avoid touching the extraction site with your tongue or fingers, do not drink liquids through a straw, and do not spit vigorously.
- Blowing your nose or sneezing violently can also dislodge the blood clot and impair healing, so if you have an upper respiratory infection or suffer from allergies, be sure to have the appropriate sinus medication on hand.
- Do not rinse your mouth the day of the surgery.
- Smoking, or allowing food particles to pack into the tooth's socket should be avoided, as both will significantly affect the healing process.
- Rinse with mouthwash or a warm salt water solution (one teaspoon of salt dissolved in one cup of warm water) 24 hours following the procedure. Gently swish the solution around the affected area, and spit carefully. You should do this 2–3 times each day during the week following the extraction.
- If antibiotics were prescribed, continue to take them for the indicated length of time, even if all symptoms and signs of infection are gone.
- Relax as much as possible and avoid all strenuous activities for the first 24 hours following surgery.
- Because nourishment is important to the healing process, eat once the numbness has worn off. Limit your diet to soft foods like yogurt, soup, ice cream, or soft-cooked eggs for the first 48 hours.
- Drink at least eight large glasses of water or fruit juice each day.
- At night, keep your head elevated with pillows to control bleeding. We will give you a supply of gauze sponges to place over the bleeding area. Change the pad as necessary, and use them until the bleeding stops completely. You can also bite gently but firmly on a moist tea bag for 20 minutes. Be sure to call our office if bleeding persists or increases.
- Brush and floss the other areas of your mouth as you would normally.
- The space left by the tooth will feel a bit strange to you at first. Eventually, new bone and gum tissue will grow into the gap left by the extraction.