

# After Dental Extractions or Wisdom Teeth Removal

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## Pain and discomfort

- After the local anesthetic (freezing) wears off, you may feel some pain and discomfort in your jaw. This is common. It may last for a few days. The amount of pain is different for each person.
- If you were prescribed pain medication, take it as directed.

## Remember:

- The pain medication may not completely relieve your pain.
- The pain may continue to get worse before it starts to get better.

## Bleeding

- After your tooth has been removed, the tooth socket (hole in your gum) will fill with blood. The blood will form a clot or a scab, just like a cut on your skin.
- **Do not disturb or remove this clot.** Keep your tongue, your toothbrush, and rough foods away from the clot.

- **Do not use straws. The sucking action can suck the clot out of the socket and cause bleeding.**

The socket may ooze a bit of blood for the first few hours after surgery. If you drool blood, it is likely mostly saliva (spit) mixed with a bit of blood. **If you think the socket is bleeding too much:**

1. Wash your hands.
2. Wet 2 or 3, 2 x 2-inch gauze pads. (If you do not have gauze, you can use the corner of a face cloth or tea bags.)
3. Roll each pad into a ball.
4. Place the pads over the bleeding socket.
5. Bite firmly on the pads for 20 to 30 minutes, putting firm pressure on the socket.

Repeat these steps 2 to 3 times, if needed.

This will usually stop any bleeding.

**If this does not stop the bleeding,** call the Oral Maxillofacial Surgery Clinic:

› Phone: 902-473-2070

Do not worry if you see a few spots of blood on your pillow the next morning.

## Swelling

- It is common to have swelling in your jaw and cheeks. This usually gets worse for 2 to 3 days after surgery before it starts to get better.
- To help with swelling:
  - › Place a bag of ice or frozen peas wrapped in a cloth or a towel at the outside of your jaw.
  - › Hold it there for 20 minutes, then keep it off for 20 minutes.
  - › Do this for the first 24 hours (1 day) (except when you are sleeping).

**Remember:** Swelling is usually worse 2 to 3 days after surgery.

## Trouble swallowing and opening your mouth wide

- It may be hard for you to open your mouth wide for several days.
- It may also be hard to swallow:
  - › for the first few hours after surgery because of the freezing.
  - › for several days after surgery because of discomfort and pain.
- Some people do not have trouble swallowing.

## Bruising

- After several days, you may see bruising on your jaws and down your neck. You may have more bruising if you bruise easily.

## Having a fever and feeling sick

- You may have a fever (temperature above 38 °C or 100.4 °F) for 24 to 48 hours (1 to 2 days) after surgery.
- You may also have nausea (feeling sick to your stomach) or vomiting (throwing up). This can be because of the surgery, sedatives (medications used to freeze your mouth and help you relax), or pain medications used during surgery. This will get better over time.

## Hygiene

- **Do not rinse your mouth for the first 24 hours after surgery.** This may push the clot out of the socket and cause it to start bleeding.
- After 24 hours, start **gently** rinsing with warm salt water (a pinch of salt in a glass of warm water). Let the water fall out of your mouth gently instead of spitting.
- As the incision (cut) in your gum heals, you can rinse with more force.

- **Do not rinse for 7 days (1 week) with anything other than a prescription mouth rinse or salt water.**
- After 24 hours, you can brush your teeth, but **do not brush the socket for 5 to 7 days.**
- If you have an empty socket, you may have to rinse more often to keep it clean until it heals.

## **Eating and drinking**

- **Do not eat hot foods or drink hot liquids for 24 hours.** You may eat and drink cold, soft foods and liquids during the first 24 hours.
- Try to eat softer foods for the first 2 to 3 days (like soups, yogurt, puddings, and ice cream). Softer foods will not tear your stitches (if you have them) or get stuck in empty sockets.
- After the first few days, avoid the empty socket when eating tougher foods until you find it comfortable to chew.
- It may take several weeks for the gum tissue to grow over the socket. Food will probably get stuck in the socket until it has fully closed. This may cause problems with bad breath and a bad taste in your mouth. You can rinse with salt water (see page 4) to help keep your mouth clean.

## Infection

- If you have swelling, pain, and discomfort after the first 2 to 3 days, this could be a sign of infection. Infections sometimes happen after having wisdom teeth taken out.

### **Call the Clinic at 902-473-2070 if you have:**

- › Fever (temperature above 38 °C or 100.4 °F)
- › Nausea or vomiting
- › Pus draining from the socket
- › A bad taste in your mouth

## Stitches

- If you have stitches in your gums, they will dissolve (go away) on their own in 3 to 8 days. You may see a few spots of blood in your saliva when this happens.

## Sedation and anesthesia

- You may have had an intravenous (I.V.) sedative. If so, you may not remember much about your surgery.
- Although you may feel awake and alert, there may still be sedatives in your system. Your health care team will make sure you have recovered before you leave.

## After surgery

- For 24 hours:
  - › Stay home and rest quietly.
  - › **You must have someone at home with you.**
- For 24 to 48 hours:
  - › **Do not drive a car.**
  - › **Do not do any dangerous activities** (like using power tools).
  - › **Do not sign** any important legal documents.

## Smoking

- Smoking can slow healing or lead to an infection or dry socket (see below). If you smoke, you should try to stop until the socket heals. This may take 2 to 3 weeks.
- If you cannot wait this long, it is best to stop smoking for as long as possible after surgery. Ask a member of your health care team for information about quitting smoking or nicotine replacement therapy (NRT).

## Dry socket

- Dry socket is when you still have pain even after the pain from surgery is better. It can happen after any dental extraction.



- Dry socket is more common in the lower jaw. It is more likely to happen in:
  - › Females, especially females who take birth control pills
  - › People who smoke
- With dry socket, you may have:
  - › A lot of pain in the socket that is not helped by pain medication
  - › Pain that spreads to the front of your jaw or to your ear
- Depending on how painful it is, you may have to come to the Clinic for medication.

**Remember:** You may only have a few or all of the symptoms. This will depend on how hard it was to remove your tooth.

**What are your questions?**

**Please ask. We are here to help you.**

## **Urgent concerns**

- › Phone: 902-473-5238
- › Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.,  
Monday to Friday
- If there is no answer, leave a message. Outside of these hours, call Locating and ask to have the oral surgery resident on call paged:
  - › Phone: 902-473-2222

## **Non-urgent questions**

- Call the Oral Maxillofacial Surgery Clinic:
  - › Phone: 902-473-2070
  - › Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.,  
Monday to Friday

This pamphlet is just a guide. If you have questions, please talk to your health care provider. We are here to help you.

# Notes:

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This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find all patient education resources here:  
[www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources](http://www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources)

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:  
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

*Prepared by:* Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, QEII  
*Designed and Managed by:* Library Services

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