



Patient & Family Guide
2026

After a Dental Extraction

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After a Dental Extraction

- You have had a dental extraction (a tooth removed). It is normal to have some pain, swelling, and minor bleeding after your procedure. This pamphlet explains what to expect as you recover.

Sedation

- If you had intravenous (I.V.) sedation (medication to help you relax), you may not remember much about your procedure.
- While you may feel awake and alert, sedation can stay in your body for several hours. Before you leave the hospital, your health care team will make sure you are ready to go home.

For the first 24 hours (1 day) after having sedation:

- › Stay home and rest quietly.
- › **Have a responsible adult stay with you.**
- › **Do not** drink alcohol.
- › **Do not** operate heavy machinery (like mowing the lawn, shoveling snow) or do hazardous activities (like using power tools).
- › **Do not** make important decisions or sign legal documents.

For 24 to 48 hours (1 to 2 days) after having sedation:

- › **Do not** drive a car or other vehicle.

Pain and discomfort

- After the **local anesthetic** (freezing medication used to numb your mouth) wears off, it is normal to have some pain and discomfort in your jaw.
 - › This may last for several days. It is different for each person.
 - › The pain may get worse before it starts to get better.
- If you were prescribed pain medication, take it as directed by your health care provider. Remember that pain medication may not fully relieve your pain.

Swelling and bruising

- It is common to have swelling in your jaw and cheeks after your procedure. Swelling often gets **worse 2 to 3 days after the procedure** and then starts to get better.
- You may also have bruising on your jaw or neck several days after your procedure. This is normal.

To help lower swelling:

- › Put a bag of ice or frozen peas wrapped in a cloth or a towel on the outside of your jaw.
- › Leave it on for 20 minutes, then take it off for 20 minutes.
- › Repeat this for the first 24 hours after your procedure, except when you are sleeping.

Trouble opening your mouth and swallowing

- You may have trouble opening your mouth wide for several days after your procedure.
- You may also have trouble swallowing:
 - › For the first few hours, because of the local anesthetic
 - › For several days, because of swelling, discomfort, or pain
- These symptoms are normal and should get better as you heal.

Stitches

- If you have stitches in your gums, they will usually dissolve (go away) on their own within 3 to 8 days.
- You may have a few spots of blood in your spit when the stitches dissolve. This is normal.

Bleeding

- After your tooth is removed, the tooth socket (hole in your gum) will fill with blood. This blood forms a clot, like a scab on a cut.
 - › **Do not** disturb (touch) the clot.
 - › Keep your tongue, your toothbrush, and hard or rough foods away from the extraction site (where your tooth was taken out).
- **Do not use a straw.** The sucking action can cause the clot to come off and cause bleeding.
- A small amount of oozing is normal for the first few hours after your procedure.
 - › If you see blood in your spit, it is often mostly spit mixed with a small amount of blood.

If the extraction site is bleeding heavily:

1. Wash your hands.
2. Wet 2 to 3 pieces of gauze and roll them into small pads. If you do not have gauze, use the corner of a clean face cloth or a moist tea bag.
3. Put the gauze directly over the extraction site.
4. Bite down firmly for 20 to 30 minutes without checking the area.

- Repeat these steps 2 to 3 times, if needed. This will usually stop the bleeding.
- **If the bleeding still does not stop, call the Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Clinic.**
 - › Phone: 902-473-5238
- It is normal to have a few spots of blood on your pillow the morning after your procedure.

Oral (mouth) hygiene

- **Do not rinse your mouth for the first 24 hours after your procedure.** Rinsing may move the blood clot and cause bleeding.
- **After 24 hours,** gently rinse your mouth with warm salt water (a pinch of salt in a glass of warm water). Let the water flow out of your mouth instead of spitting it out forcefully.
 - › As your gums heal, you can rinse more forcefully.
- **After 24 hours,** you may brush your teeth, but **do not** brush the extraction site for 5 to 7 days.
 - › If food gets in the extraction site, you may need to rinse more often to keep the area clean while it heals.
- **For the first 7 days, do not** use any mouth rinse or mouthwash other than a prescribed mouth rinse or salt water.



Eating guidelines

- **For 24 hours after your procedure, do not eat hot foods or drink hot liquids.** Choose cold or lukewarm soft foods and drinks.
- **For the first 2 to 3 days,** eat softer foods (like soup, yogurt, pudding, and ice cream). Soft foods are less likely to irritate the extraction site or stitches.
- As you heal, you can slowly go back to your usual eating habits. **Do not** chew directly on the extraction site until it feels comfortable.
- It may take several weeks for your gum tissue to fully cover the extraction site. Food may get stuck in the area while it heals, which can cause bad breath or a bad taste in your mouth. Rinse gently with salt water to help keep the area clean.

Infection

- Sometimes, you can get an infection after a dental extraction.
- Tell your oral surgeon if your pain or swelling keeps getting worse after the first 2 to 3 days, especially if you also have:
 - › Fever (temperature above 38 °C or 100.4 °F)
 - › Chills
 - › Pus draining from the extraction site
 - › Bad taste in your mouth

Nausea and vomiting

- You may feel tired, have nausea (upset stomach), or vomit (throw up) after your procedure.
 - › This can be from the medications used during your procedure, including sedation and pain medication.
 - › These symptoms should get better within 24 to 48 hours.
- Drink fluids as you are able to and rest.

Dry socket

- Dry socket is a painful condition that can happen after a dental extraction. Normally, a blood clot forms at the extraction site and protects the bone and nerves while the area heals. Dry socket happens when the blood clot moves from the site or does not form properly.

Signs of dry socket may include:

- › Severe (very bad) pain that is not helped by pain medication
- › Pain that spreads to your jaw or ear
- › Pain that starts or gets worse several days after your procedure

- Dry socket is more common after extractions in the lower jaw and in people who smoke.
- **If you think you have dry socket, call the Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Clinic:**
 - › Phone: 902-473-5238

Smoking

- Smoking can slow healing and raise your risk of infection and dry socket (see page 7).
- If you smoke, try not to smoke until the extraction site has healed. This may take 14 to 21 days (2 to 3 weeks).
- If you are not able to stop smoking for this long, try not to smoke for as long as possible after your procedure.
- If you would like help quitting smoking or using nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), talk to a member of your health care team.

Call the Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Clinic right away if you have urgent questions or concerns, or if you have any of these symptoms:

- › Bleeding that does not stop after putting pressure
- › Trouble breathing
- › Finding it harder to swallow
- › Fever (temperature above 38 °C or 100.4 °F)
- › Pain that is getting worse or not getting better
- › More swelling
- › Pus draining from the extraction site
- › Nausea or vomiting that is getting worse or not getting better

Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Clinic

- › Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday to Friday
- › Phone: 902-473-5238

For urgent concerns outside of clinic hours, call locating and ask to talk with the oral surgery resident on call:

- › Phone: 902-473-2222
- › Stay on the phone and the resident will be with you shortly.

If you have non-urgent questions:

Call the Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Clinic:

- › Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.,
Monday to Friday
- › Phone: 902-473-2070
- Please leave a voicemail message. We will call
you back as soon as possible.

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

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

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