
After a Tooth Extraction: Caring for Your Mouth

When you've had a tooth removed (extracted), you need to take care of your mouth. Doing certain things, even on the first day, may help you feel better and heal faster.

Control bleeding

To help control bleeding, bite firmly on the gauze placed by your dentist. The pressure helps to form a blood clot in the tooth socket. Bite on the gauze until the bleeding stops. A little blood oozing on the first day is normal.

Minimize pain

To lessen any pain, take prescribed medicine as directed. Don't drive while taking any pain medicine. It may make you feel drowsy. Ask your dentist if you may take over-the-counter medicine, if needed. Talk with your provider before using over-the-counter medicines if you have chronic liver or kidney disease, ever had a stomach ulcer or digestive bleeding, or are taking blood-thinner medicines.

Reduce swelling

To reduce swelling, put an ice pack on your cheek near the extraction site. To make an ice pack, put ice in a plastic bag that seals at the top. Wrap the bag in a clean, thin towel or cloth. Put the ice pack on your cheek for 10 minutes. Then remove it for 5 minutes. Repeat as needed. You may see some bruising on your face. This is normal. It will go away on its own.

Get enough rest

Limit activities like exercise and lifting heavy things for the first 24 hours after an extraction. This will help a blood clot form and prevent bleeding. When lying down, raise your head slightly.

Do's

Below are some things to do to help your mouth heal.

- **Do eat a diet of soft, healthy foods and snacks.** Also drink plenty of liquids.
- **Do brush your teeth gently.** Avoid brushing around the extraction. Ask your dentist if you can use toothpaste and when you can start rinsing your mouth gently.
- **Do keep the extraction site clean.** After 12 hours, you may be able to gently rinse your mouth. Rinse 4 times a day with 1/2 teaspoon of salt in a glass of warm water or as directed by your dentist.

Don'ts

Below are some things to avoid while you're healing.

- **Don't drink with a straw, suck on candy or ice pops, slurp soups or other liquids, rinse your mouth vigorously, or smoke for 24 hours.** These things create suction in the mouth. This may dislodge the blood clot.
- **Don't drink alcohol or use mouthwash containing alcohol for 24 hours.** Alcohol use may delay healing.
- **Don't spit.** Spitting may loosen or dislodge the clot.

When to get medical advice

Get in touch with your dentist right away if you have any of these:

- Pain is more severe the day after your extraction.
- Bleeding gets hard to control.
- Swelling around the extraction site gets worse.
- Itching or rashes occur after you take medicine
- Fever, nausea, or vomiting