

After Your Tooth Extraction

The first 24 hours, the first week, and the specific signs that mean you should call us

YOUR OWN WRITTEN INSTRUCTIONS AND PRESCRIPTION COME FIRST

Where the sheet your dentist gave you differs from this general handout, follow the sheet your dentist gave you. This document contains no dose and no prescription.

PATIENT	TOOTH / SITE	PROCEDURE DATE	DENTIST
---------	--------------	----------------	---------

THE FIRST 24 HOURS — HOUR BY HOUR

WHEN	WHAT TO DO	WHAT TO AVOID	WHAT IS NORMAL
First 30–60 minutes	Bite down with firm, steady pressure on the gauze placed by the dental team. Keep your jaw closed. Sit upright.	Do not talk more than necessary. Do not keep checking the site.	Steady pressure feels uncomfortable but should not be painful.
1–3 hours	Replace the gauze with a fresh, folded, dampened pad if oozing continues. Bite for another 30–45 minutes.	Do not rinse, spit, or use a straw. Do not smoke or vape.	Saliva tinged pink or light red. A small amount of blood mixes with a lot of saliva and looks like more than it is.
First 24 hours	Apply a cold pack to the outside of the face, 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off, while you are awake. Rest with your head elevated, including on extra pillows at night.	No rinsing, no spitting, no straws, no smoking, no vaping, no alcohol, no strenuous activity, no hot liquids.	Swelling that increases through the day. Mild oozing. Stiffness in the jaw.
That night	Sleep with your head raised on two pillows. Place a towel over the pillowcase.	Do not lie flat.	Slight oozing onto the pillow overnight.

The blood clot that forms in the socket is what heals the site. Almost every restriction in the first 24 hours exists to protect that clot. Suction from a straw, smoking, or vigorous rinsing is what dislodges it.

DAYS 2 THROUGH 7

DAY	RINSING	EATING	CLEANING	ACTIVITY
Day 2	Begin gentle warm salt-water rinses — ½ teaspoon of salt in 8 ounces of warm water — after meals and before bed. Let the water fall out of your mouth. Do not swish forcefully and do not spit.	Soft, lukewarm foods: yogurt, eggs, mashed potatoes, soup that is not hot, smoothies eaten with a spoon.	Brush all other teeth normally. Avoid the extraction site itself.	Light activity. No lifting, no running, no gym.
Days 3–4	Continue salt-water rinses 4–5 times daily.	Add soft pasta, flaked fish, soft cooked vegetables. Chew on the opposite side.	Brush gently near, but not directly on, the site.	Resume normal walking and daily routine as comfort allows.
Days 5–7	Continue rinses until the site is comfortable.	Gradually return to your usual diet as comfort allows.	Resume gentle brushing of the area once it is no longer tender.	Resume exercise if comfortable.

FOODS TO AVOID UNTIL HEALING IS WELL UNDERWAY

- Anything crunchy or sharp: chips, nuts, popcorn, crusty bread, raw carrots
- Seeds and small grains that can lodge in the socket: sesame, quinoa, rice
- Sticky foods: caramel, chewing gum, taffy
- Very hot foods and drinks, which increase bleeding
- Spicy or acidic foods, which irritate the site
- Alcohol, and carbonated drinks for the first day
- Anything requiring a straw, at any point in the first week

MEDICINES

Take only what your dentist prescribed or specifically recommended for you, at the dose and interval written on your own prescription or instruction sheet. This handout intentionally contains no dose.

- If an antibiotic was prescribed, complete the entire course even if you feel fine.
- Tell your dentist about every other medicine you take, including blood thinners and supplements.
- Do not take a medicine prescribed for someone else.
- Do not combine products without checking; many combination products contain the same active ingredient.
- Take pain medicine before the numbness fully wears off if your dentist advised that.
- Eat something first unless you were told to take it on an empty stomach.

CALL US — THESE ARE NOT NORMAL

SIGN	WHEN IT TYPICALLY APPEARS	CALL
Bleeding that soaks through fresh gauze and does not slow after two hours of firm pressure	First day	Same day — 555-0150 or 555-0151
Pain that was improving and then becomes worse, often spreading to the ear or jaw, usually with a bad taste or odor	Typically days 3–5	Same day — this may be a dry socket
Swelling that is still increasing after day 3, or swelling that spreads to the eye or neck	After day 3	Same day
Fever, chills, or feeling generally unwell	Any time	Same day
Difficulty swallowing, difficulty breathing, or inability to open your mouth	Any time	Emergency — call 911
Numbness in the lip, chin, or tongue that has not resolved after 24 hours	After day 1	Next business day
A rash, hives, or swelling after taking a prescribed medicine	Any time	Stop the medicine and call immediately; call 911 for breathing difficulty

BEFORE YOU LEAVE THE OFFICE, TELL US IN YOUR OWN WORDS

1. What you will do with the gauze, and for how long.
2. What you will eat and drink tonight, and what you will avoid.
3. When you will start rinsing, and how you will rinse.
4. Which medicines you will take, and when.
5. What would make you call us, and which number you would call.

If any of these is unclear, please ask before you leave. It is much easier to answer here than over the phone tonight.

FICTIONAL SPECIMEN. Bright Harbor Dental, its phone numbers, and this document are invented for demonstration only. The content reflects commonly published general post-extraction themes but is not dental advice, not a prescription, not a real practice handout, and must not be followed in place of instructions from your own dentist.