



**HARVARD ORAL AND MAXILLOFACIAL SURGERY ASSOCIATES**  
**(617-726-2740)**

***POSTOPERATIVE INSTRUCTION SHEET***  
***Tooth Extractions***

**General Comments:** Tooth extraction is a surgical procedure, and many patients will experience discomfort such as pain, swelling, and difficulty eating following the procedure. You should expect these symptoms to last 24 to 72 hours. The following information is provided to facilitate your recovery and maintain comfort after the operation.

**Problem #1 - BLEEDING**

The doctor will have you bite on cotton gauze to put pressure on the extraction site. This helps to control bleeding and is similar to putting pressure on a cut on your hand to stop bleeding. You should continue to bite on the gauze for 1 to 2 hours. It is common to have some bleeding for 1 to 2 days after the operation. Whenever you brush your teeth, rinse your mouth or spit, there may be some pink in your saliva. This is perfectly normal and not of concern. If you examine the wound and there is heavy bleeding directly at the extraction site, you should contact our office so that we can evaluate whether this is a problem. Most bleeding is controlled by applying direct pressure on the wound. Biting on gauze for 15 minutes to ½ hour should control the bleeding.

**Problem #2 - EATING**

While some foods may be uncomfortable, it is unlikely that anything you eat can hurt the extraction sites. You can eat and drink anything you want that doesn't hurt.

**Problem #3 - ORAL HYGIENE**

Every time you eat something, you should rinse your mouth out with warm salt water (teaspoon of salt in 8 ounces of warm tap water). The purpose of this is to keep the extraction sites as clean as possible in order to decrease the risk of infection. In some cases, we may prescribe an antibacterial mouth rinse (Peridex). If prescribed, you should rinse your mouth with one capful of mouth rinse for 30 seconds and spit it out twice a day (morning and evening).

**Problem #4 - SWELLING**

An ice pack applied to the face near the region of the extraction sites helps to reduce swelling. Keep packs applied to the face as much as possible for the first 24 to 48 hours after the operation.

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**Problem #5 - PAIN**

Your doctor may use a long-acting anesthetic that should keep your mouth numb (and pain free) for 2 to 6 hours after the operation. When this local anesthesia wears off, you should expect to have pain and discomfort.

If you have been given a prescription for pain medicine, take 1 to 2 pills every 3 to 6 hours as needed for pain during the first 24 to 36 hours after the procedure. After this time, you may be able to control your pain with analgesics such as Tylenol, or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medicines, such as Ibuprofen (found in the brands Advil, Nuprin and Motrin), Aleve, or other over-the-counter medications that you might take for headache pain. Remember, **never take pain medicine on an empty stomach.**

**Problem #6 - SUTURES**

If you required sutures, they are most likely dissolving sutures. You should expect them to become loose and fall out between 3 and 10 days after the operation as the extraction site heals. Generally speaking, you do not need to come back to the clinic to have sutures removed.

**Problem #7 - FOLLOW-UP AFTER THE OPERATION**

We like to schedule most patients for follow-up visits 5 to 7 days after the procedure. The majority of complications following extraction of impacted teeth occur within this time frame. Your follow-up appointments are an important part of the surgical management of your post-operative care, and help to ensure your comfort and health during recovery.

**PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO CALL OUR OFFICE (617-726-2740) IF YOU HAVE ANY PROBLEMS, QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS REGARDING YOUR CARE. IF AT ANY TIME IN THE DAYS FOLLOWING YOUR PROCEDURE YOU EXPERIENCE FEVER GREATER THAN 100.5 DEGREES, PLEASE CALL US IMMEDIATELY.**