

Caring for your mouth after surgery

Local Anaesthetic Maxillofacial Unit

Will I feel any discomfort afterwards?

After any operation in the mouth, a certain amount of soreness and swelling is inevitable. Your wound is likely to be painful when the anaesthetic wears off.

You will probably experience some tenderness and swelling for a few days and this is likely to be accompanied by some bruising around the face and neck. This may take two to three days to develop and a week or more to subside.

Painkillers should be taken as advised or prescribed by the medical staff. The usual painkillers you take at home for minor ailments, such as ibuprofen or paracetamol are normally sufficient. Please read the dosage instructions carefully, particularly when combining different types of medication.

Should I expect any bleeding?

Before you leave the hospital we ensure that your wound or tooth socket has stopped bleeding and formed a clot. **Please do not rinse your mouth out (or spit out continuously) for the first 24 hours.** You should **avoid** hot drinks and strenuous exercise for the rest of the day following surgery. **Do not** poke the area with fingers or tongue.

Disturbing the clot in such ways may cause bleeding to start again. If this occurs, do not panic. Gently spit out the excess blood and place a folded gauze swab, or clean handkerchief over the bleeding area and bite down or apply firm pressure for 15-20 minutes whilst at rest. Repeat if necessary and seek advice from the hospital if the bleeding does not stop or you are worried.

How will it feel?

The local anaesthetic injected into your gum or soft tissue should wear off within a few hours. Do take care not to bite or chew your lips, cheek or tongue whilst still numb.

Stitches are often placed during surgery and usually dissolve within 1-3 weeks, unless you are informed otherwise.

It is common to have an unusual taste in the mouth and to have a little trace of blood in your saliva. It is quite safe to swallow saliva as normal.

You may experience some temporary limited mouth opening and jaw stiffness for a few days or weeks.

You may find you need to use moisturising cream, petroleum jelly or lip salve around the corners of your mouth for a few days after your procedure.

Please be aware that creams and ointments containing paraffin or petroleum jelly (eg. Vaseline), catch fire easily. Avoid smoking or contact with high heat if you have this on your face or mouth. It could cause serious burns.

Eating and drinking

We recommend a diet of soft, smooth, cooled-down (or cold) food and drinks in the first 24 hours after your operation. If possible, try to eat and drink on the other side of your mouth, and avoid alcohol during this time.

Cleaning teeth

Brush your teeth carefully during the first 24 hours, avoiding the wound site(s), and spit any toothpaste out gently, rather than rinsing. Normal brushing and oral hygiene methods may be resumed the day after surgery.

Avoiding infection

Healing is usually straightforward, providing the area is left undisturbed and the mouth kept as clean as possible. It is important to **avoid smoking** until your wound has healed completely. Smoking significantly increases the risk of developing infection or a painful condition called dry socket.

The day after your procedure, start using warm salty water (half a teaspoon of table salt dissolved in a small tumbler of warm water) to gently rinse over the extraction socket or wound 3-4 times a day, particularly after eating. Do not swallow this solution. Continue for 4-5 days.

If chlorhexidine mouthwash is prescribed, use as directed to rinse the mouth out gently for 2 minutes, several times daily.

Some patients are prescribed antibiotics after their operation. It is important to finish the whole course of this medication to prevent wound infection.

Please note: female patients should be aware that antibiotics can reduce the effectiveness of the contraceptive pill and should consider using alternative methods of contraception.

Further questions

If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us:

If you have constant bleeding or a sudden and severe increase in pain or swelling, please telephone the hospital switchboard on **01342 414000** and **ask for the maxillofacial doctor on duty.**

Please ask if you
would like this leaflet
in a different format.