

Caring for your mouth after surgery

Local Anaesthetic Maxillofacial Unit

Will I feel any discomfort afterwards?

After any operation in the mouth some soreness and swelling are likely when the anaesthetic wears off.

Tenderness and swelling will probably last for a few days and 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 ease off.

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. Please ask our medical staff if you need any advice about painkillers.

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** disturb the area with your fingers or tongue.

Disrupting the blood clot in your wound or tooth socket 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. Take care not to bite or chew your lips, cheek or tongue whilst still numb.

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.

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

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 drink 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 and vaping** 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 this for 4-5 days.

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

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

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.**



If you'd like to find out how you can support QVH, please visit www.supportqvh.org