**Medication**

We recommend that you consider taking some form of pain reliever within the first 45 minutes of leaving the office. By doing so, you have an easier transition as the local anesthetic (numbing medicine) wears off. For many simple procedures, over the counter pain relievers will be all that is necessary. Appropriate prescription pain relievers will be prescribed whenever indicated. After the first dose, take additional pain relievers only as needed, according to the directions on the bottle. If antibiotics were prescribed, please be sure to follow the directions that are on the bottle and take the entire prescription. Medications should be taken with a full 8oz of water or clear juice. You can sip the water or juice slowly over a five or ten minute period. This will help prevent nausea. If you develop hives, rash, or any other reaction to the medication, stop taking it and call our office. Do not drive or operate machinery while taking prescription pain medication, this can be dangerous.

**Bleeding**

Following the removal of a tooth, gauze will be placed on the extraction site. Bite down firmly for 30 minutes to help stabilize a blood clot. After 30 minutes you can discard the gauze. You may apply a new gauze for another 30 minutes or so if bleeding has not slowed sufficiently. Mild, intermittent bleeding or oozing is normal for 24 hours or so following oral surgery.
Swelling

Unfortunately, surgery and swelling go hand in hand. The extent of swelling varies widely between patients. Swelling starts slowly following your surgery. It is normal for puffiness to increase for 3 - 4 days following a surgical procedure. Placing an ice pack on your face overlying the area where your surgery took place can help minimize the swelling. Ice packs are most effective if used immediately after your procedure, and off and on throughout the first day. Apply ice packs for 20 minute intervals with breaks of about 10 minutes in between. Occasionally, swelling can be accompanied by bruising, especially around the lower jaw. After the first 4 days, your swelling will gradually dissipate. Most of your swelling will be gone after 10 days.

Discomfort Following Surgery

Unfortunately, discomfort is normal after any type of surgery. It is difficult to predict the level of discomfort an individual will feel. When different patients have the same procedure performed, there is always variation between individual experiences with pain. Even when identical procedures are performed on different sides of the same patient (for example, 2 lower wisdom teeth) the level of discomfort may not be the same on both sides. This does not necessarily mean that something is wrong. In general, the longer or more difficult a procedure is, the more discomfort can be expected. Many oral surgery procedures involve bone and bone is a relatively slow tissue to heal. It is common for pains to come and go for a week or so following surgery. If there is a steady increase in pain and medications are not effective, it is best to call the office.

We recommend that you manage discomfort aggressively and pro-actively in the beginning: Take the first dose of pain medication before the local anesthesia wears off. You may certainly start with something over the counter (e.g. Aleve, Motrin) if you prefer not to take prescription narcotics. Take prescription pain medication only when necessary, and do not exceed the amount written on the bottle. As time goes by and healing progresses, discomfort always decreases.
Diet
For a few days following oral surgery you should stay on a soft food diet. Some suggestions are: scrambled eggs, soup, cottage cheese, flakey fish, macaroni and cheese, etc. Avoid eating nuts, chips, and other foods that can be sharp and difficult to chew. You may gradually eat solid food as you become comfortable chewing again.

Oral Hygiene
A clean environment is very important for the healing process. Remember, it will take a day or so for blood clots at the surgical sites to stabilize, so it is important to be gentle with your oral hygiene during the initial period. Brush your teeth as well as possible while avoiding the surgery site. If you normally use a powered toothbrush like Sonicare or OralB, consider turning it off when you brush, or switching to a manual toothbrush for a few days. Late in the day of your surgery or the next morning, start warm salt-water rinses. Mix a teaspoon of salt with a glass of warm water, and swish gently for about 30 seconds. Do this frequently (and gently), especially after you eat. Try not to spit forcefully, instead simply let gravity do the work. Continue rinsing frequently throughout the first week or so.

Nausea
There are multiple reasons for nausea and vomiting after surgery. Common causes include residual effects of anesthesia, narcotic pain medication, ingesting blood, and dietary changes. Taking your pain medication with a little food and a full glass of water (sipped slowly over 10 minutes) may help to decrease nausea. If nausea is persistent, try to stop taking the pain medication and call our office.

Jaw Stiffness
Known as trismus, jaw stiffness is caused by muscles tightening up due to the inflammation and mild injury caused by surgery. It is a common occurrence following surgery at the back part of the upper and / or lower jaw. This is where your major chewing muscles are located. A way to relieve stiffness is to slowly open your mouth as wide as possible, holding that position for a few seconds, then slowly closing. Gently forcing your front teeth a little farther apart with your own fingers will also help improve your opening. Repeat as often as necessary. Moist heat (e.g., hot water bottle, warm washcloth, commercially available heat pack) will also help lessen the stiffness. You may notice a mild increase in swelling if you use moist heat therapy.
Activity

Following more involved surgical procedures you should get plenty of rest. Wait at least 2 - 3 days after surgery to resume exercise, sports, or other physical activities. Following simple procedures, modest exercise is ok. Be sure to take it easy so you do not cause throbbing or bleeding.

Stitches

We most often use dissolving stitches and they will usually fall away within 7-10 days. Sometimes stitches come out early and this is not a cause for concern. If stitches have not fallen out in ten days or so or if they become irritating, we can take them out for you. Stitches may be stiff and annoying in the beginning but will soften and become less noticeable with time.

Smoking

Don’t smoke. Smoking has a lot of negative effects. Smoking before surgery interferes with circulation and oxygen delivery to the tissues. This decreases your body’s ability to heal. Smoking causes airway and breathing irritability, and is a well known cause of anesthesia complications. Smoking after any type of surgery has a direct negative effect on healing. The negative effects of smoking are particularly troublesome for oral surgery procedures because the toxins will have direct contact with the surgical sites. Cigarette smokers are much more likely to suffer from dry socket and other complications following simple procedures.

It is our job to address your questions and concerns. You can contact the doctor after hours with emergency questions. If any condition is causing serious concern after hours (e.g. persistent brisk bleeding or swelling affecting your ability to swallow or breath) it may be best to go to an emergency room for immediate evaluation.

We always appreciate the kindness of your referrals. If you have friends or family members that might benefit from dental implants or other oral surgery procedures please ask them to consider calling our office.