



Home Care After a Tooth Extraction

A blood clot forms in the socket where your tooth was. That clot protects the bone and helps it heal. Most of these steps are about keeping it in place. If anything worries you, call us at **(330) 847-0676**.

The first hour: stop the bleeding

- Bite firmly on the gauze for **30 to 60 minutes**. Try not to chew on it or keep checking it.
- Still bleeding? Fold a fresh piece of gauze, place it right on the spot, and bite for **30 more minutes**. A damp black tea bag also works, because tea helps blood clot.
- Pink-tinged saliva for a day or two is normal.

The first few days

- Rest. Keep your head up on an extra pillow for the first two nights.
- **For 72 hours, do not spit, smoke, vape or use a straw.** Sucking and spitting can pull the clot out and cause a painful **dry socket**.
- Hold an ice pack on your cheek: **20 minutes on, 20 minutes off**, for the first day or two.
- Wait until the numbness wears off before you eat or have hot drinks, so you do not bite or burn yourself.
- No alcohol for 24 hours, or while you take a prescription pain medicine. No hard exercise or heavy lifting for 2 to 3 days.

Pain relief

- Research shows that **ibuprofen** (Advil, Motrin) taken together with **acetaminophen** (Tylenol) works well for most people after dental treatment. It often works better than opioid pain pills, with fewer side effects.
- Take your first dose before the numbness wears off.
- Do not take more acetaminophen than the label allows. Many cold and flu medicines also contain it.
- Ask us before taking ibuprofen if you take a blood thinner, have kidney disease, stomach ulcers or stomach bleeding, or are pregnant.
- If we prescribed an antibiotic, take every dose until it is gone.

Take pain medicine the way Dr. Singh told you to. If you were not given directions, follow the package label.

Eating and drinking

- Start with soft, cool foods such as yogurt, applesauce, mashed potatoes and eggs. Eat smoothies with a spoon, not a straw.



- For about a week, chew on the other side. Avoid crunchy or spicy foods and small bits like seeds and nuts that can get stuck in the socket.
- Drink plenty of water and do not skip meals. Good food helps you heal.

Keeping your mouth clean

- Brush and floss your other teeth as usual, starting the first night. Stay away from the socket for the first few days, then brush gently near it.
- Do not rinse on the first day. Starting the next day, rinse gently with warm salt water after meals and at bedtime for about a week. Mix **½ teaspoon of salt in 1 cup (8 oz) of warm water**. Tilt your head, then let the water fall out into the sink. Do not spit hard.

What is normal while you heal

- Soreness, swelling and jaw stiffness that build for 2 to 3 days, then get a little better each day. A bruise may show on your cheek or jaw. After day 3, a warm, moist washcloth on your cheek can help.
- Stitches usually dissolve on their own in 1 to 3 weeks, unless we tell you otherwise.
- Small, hard edges you feel with your tongue are usually bone. They smooth out.
- The gum usually closes over the socket in 1 to 2 weeks.

Only if this applies to you

- **Bone graft:** A few small, sand-like grains in your mouth for several days are normal. Do not touch the area with your tongue or fingers, and do not pull your lip out to look at it. Leave any stitches or covering alone.
- **Upper tooth close to the sinus:** For 2 weeks, do not blow your nose, and sneeze with your mouth open. A little blood from your nose is not unusual. Call us if air or liquid passes between your mouth and nose.

Call us at (330) 847-0676 if you have:

- Bleeding that is still heavy after 1 hour of firm pressure on gauze
- Pain that gets worse after day 3 instead of better, especially throbbing pain that spreads to your ear. This can be a dry socket, which we can treat.
- Swelling that keeps growing after day 3
- A fever of 100.4°F or higher, pus, or a bad taste that will not go away
- Numbness in your lip, chin or tongue that is still there the next day
- A rash, hives or itching after taking a medicine. Stop the medicine and call.

Call 911 or go to the emergency room if you have trouble breathing or swallowing, swelling that spreads quickly toward your eye, neck or under your jaw, or bleeding you cannot control.

Sources: ADA 2024 dental pain guideline (JADA 155:102-117); Mass Eye and Ear and McGill University oral surgery aftercare guidance. Updated October 2026.