INSTRUCTIONS FOR CARE AFTER ORAL SURGERY

CPW DENTISTRY

Things you should know after surgery

BLEEDING: When you leave the office, you might be biting on a gauze pad to control bleeding. Keep biting firmly on this gauze for at least 30 minutes. Once you remove it, you may bite on a new gauze for another 30 minutes if you feel it is still bleeding. A little bit of blood in the saliva can make your saliva appear quite red. This is normal and may be seen several days after the procedure. Tip: for stubborn bleeding, a moist black tea bag can be used instead of gauze to help with clotting!

SWELLING and **PAIN** usually get worse initially, peaking around the third day after surgery, and resolving in most cases around 10 days. Intermittently applying an ice pack to the face over the operated area (20 minutes on, 20 minutes off) will help minimize swelling, but this shouldn't be continued beyond the first 24 hours.

For minor procedures, over-the-counter ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) is safe for most patients. If pain medication is prescribed, take it as instructed on the label, and don't exceed the dose prescribed. (See reverse for more information.)

NUMBNESS from the local anesthetic may last for several hours after you leave the office. Be very careful not to bite, chew, pinch, or scratch the numb area. Sometimes an extraction, especially of a lower wisdom tooth, can cause residual numbness or tingling for several weeks.

How to care for the surgical area

DO NOT DISTURB THE AREA! For the next few days, and especially the first 24 hours, it is very important to allow your body to form a proper blood clot and start the natural healing process. Vigorous rinsing, sucking through a straw, forceful spitting, and smoking can all dislodge the clot. If stiches were used, they will dissolve in 1-2 weeks unless you are told otherwise by your doctor.

EATING should be avoided for the first few hours after surgery. For the first 1-2 days, non-chew foods such as shakes or puddings are best. Return to normal meals as soon as you are able, taking care to avoid chewing on the operated areas. Stay hydrated and drink plenty of water!

HYGIENE is critical to the success of any surgery in the mouth. Allowing plaque to accumulate invites infection. You may avoid brushing altogether for the first 12-24 hours after surgery, but you should resume—gently!—as soon as possible.

While rinsing too early can disturb the formation of the blood clot needed for healing, it's generally a good idea after 24 hours, especially after eating. Simple salt water (1-2 tsp salt in a glass of lukewarm water) works best for most. Avoid commercial mouth rinses, as these can burn the tissue. If you were prescribed a mouth rinse, do not start it until 24 hours after your surgery.

EXERCISE: After leaving the office, rest and avoid strenuous activities for the remainder of the day. Keeping the blood pressure and heart rate low will reduce bleeding and help with healing. You may return to your regular exercise routine when you feel you can tolerate it—usually about a week.

SINUSES: If your sinuses were involved in the procedure, you should avoid blowing your nose, air travel, scuba diving, inversion yoga, or playing wind instruments for two weeks. If you need to sneeze, do it with your mouth open and do not try to suppress it. Use of decongestant medications might be recommended.

SMOKING should be stopped following surgery. Healing and success of the surgery will be substantially reduced by the smoke and the chemicals in your body. Also, the suction created when inhaling can dislodge the clot. Smokers are at greater risk of developing a painful "dry socket."

PLEASE CALL THE OFFICE at **(212) 579-8885** if you have uncontrollable pain, severe bleeding, high fever, excessive warm swelling that continues to worsen more than three days after the procedure, or reactions to medications (especially rash, itching, or breathing problems). For severe or life-threatening emergencies, **dial 911**.

YOUR PRESCRIPTIONS

Pain Medications	***Non-narcotic*** ☐ No prescription needed (over-the-counter) ☐ Acetaminophen (Tylenol) ☐ Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) ☐ Naproxen (Aleve) ☐ Etodolac (Lodine) ☐ _____ ***Narcotic*** ☐ None needed ☐ Codeine + Acetaminophen (Tylenol #3) ☐ Hydrocodone + Acetaminophen (Vicodin) ☐ Oxycodone + Acetaminophen (Percocet) ☐ _____	**Non-narcotic** pain medications are generally safe, well-tolerated, and non-addictive. With the exception of acetaminophen, they are all *NSAIDs*—Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs. These block pain and inflammation (swelling) before they start. As such, they work best when taken consistently as directed, regardless of whether or not you feel pain at that moment. The most common side effect is upset stomach, which can be reduced by taking with food or milk. Patients on blood thinners may need to be careful when taking these medications, as they can cause excessive bleeding. **Narcotic** pain medications are much stronger, but have the downside of sometimes causing nausea/vomiting, sleepiness, itching, and/or constipation. They also have the potential to be abused more readily. They are generally used for *breakthrough pain* after more invasive procedures, taken as-needed every 4-6 hours when pain is not controlled with NSAIDs. You should not drink alcohol, drive, or operate heavy machinery while taking these.
Antibiotics	☐ None needed ☐ Amoxicillin ☐ Clindamycin ☐ Amoxicillin + Clavulanate (Augmentin) ☐ Azithromycin (Z-Pak) ☐ _____	While often unnecessary for simple procedures in healthy patients, **antibiotics** are used to prevent or treat infection of your surgical area. To be effective, they need to be taken on a consistent basis as directed, and to completion of the course prescribed. Stomach upset is not uncommon; taking them with dairy products can help, but tell your doctor if you experience any diarrhea while taking antibiotics. These are some of the most common drugs to which people are allergic, so make sure you know your allergies and what your doctor is prescribing. Stop taking and tell your doctor if you develop itching, a rash, swelling, or breathing problems.
Others	☐ Chlorhexidine (Peridex) ☐ Methylprednisolone (Medrol) ☐ _____ ☐ _____	**Chlorhexidine** rinse is an antiseptic mouthwash used to keep your surgical site clean, especially near teeth which will be difficult to brush while you heal. It is used twice a day, but because some toothpastes can inactivate it, you should use it at least an hour before or after brushing. **Methylprednisolone** is a six-day tapering steroid course which is used to significantly reduce inflammation (swelling). Take the pills as directed in the package—the first day will be 6 pills spread out over the course of the day, and each day thereafter is a smaller dose. If your surgery was late in the day, take what you need to get caught up for day 1, and follow the package directions from there. _____ _____ _____ _____