

Tooth extraction aftercare

Looking after your mouth after an extraction or minor oral surgery. Follow any additional instructions your dentist has given you.

First 24 hours - protect the blood clot

Rest. Avoid exercise, heavy lifting and bending down.

Do not rinse, spit, suck the socket or touch it with your tongue or fingers.

While numb, avoid hot food and drinks and take care not to bite your lip, cheek or tongue. Wait until numbness wears off before chewing.

Choose soft, cool or lukewarm food. Avoid alcohol for at least 24 hours.

Do not smoke or vape for at least 72 hours; ideally avoid both throughout healing.

After 24 hours - gentle care for one week

Gently bathe the area with warm salt water: dissolve one level teaspoon of salt in a cup of warm water. Hold it gently over the area, then let it fall out without forceful spitting. Repeat 3-4 times daily, especially after meals.

Use chlorhexidine (Corsodyl) only if we advise it, following the directions given. Brush your other teeth gently and avoid disturbing the socket. Continue soft foods as needed; avoid nuts, popcorn and sharp or crunchy foods.

If bleeding starts

Pink or blood-stained saliva is common. For fresh bleeding, sit upright and place lightly dampened gauze or a clean folded cotton cloth directly over the socket. Bite firmly for **30 minutes without checking**. Repeat once if needed.

If bleeding continues **after one hour of firm pressure**, contact us or **NHS 111**. Seek help sooner if you take blood-thinning medicine. For heavy bleeding that will not stop, go to A&E or call 999.

What is normal?

Soreness, swelling, bruising and a stiff jaw can occur. Swelling is often worst on days 2-3, then improves over the following week. More difficult surgery may take longer to settle. Dissolving stitches may take a few weeks to disappear; do not pull them.

Pain relief and getting help

Pain relief - adults aged 18 and over

Use the lowest effective dose for the shortest time. Follow the packet and any personal advice from your dentist. These doses are not for children.

Paracetamol: 500 mg-1 g (one or two 500 mg tablets) per dose, at least 4 hours apart. Maximum four doses and 4 g (eight 500 mg tablets) in any 24 hours.

Ibuprofen, if suitable: 200-400 mg with or after food, up to three times daily, at least 4 hours apart. Maximum 1,200 mg in any 24 hours unless prescribed otherwise.

If you can safely take both medicines, paracetamol and ibuprofen can be taken together if needed to help manage discomfort. Follow the doses above and your dentist's advice. If unsure whether either is suitable, check with your dentist or pharmacist. Keep a record of doses; do not exceed either daily limit.

Check with a pharmacist before ibuprofen if you have asthma, previous stomach ulcers, kidney, heart or liver problems, take blood thinners, or are pregnant. Do not combine it with aspirin, naproxen or other anti-inflammatory painkillers.

Ask about a lower paracetamol dose if you weigh under 50 kg, have liver or kidney problems, or regularly drink heavily. Do not combine products containing paracetamol, including co-codamol. If you take too much, call **NHS 111** even if you feel well.

Do not take aspirin for pain relief after your extraction. If you take prescribed aspirin or other blood-thinning medicines, **continue them unless your prescriber advises otherwise.** Do not add codeine unless advised by a clinician or pharmacist.

Contact us promptly if you notice

Severe or worsening pain, especially around days 3-5; pain with a bad taste or smell; swelling that increases after day 3; fever, pus or feeling unwell; ongoing bleeding; or numbness lasting beyond the expected anaesthetic period. Do not wait for a routine review.

Who to call

The Treatment Centre: **01872 241955**

Monday-Thursday 8:30am-4:30pm; Friday 8:30am-4pm.

Weekends - private care: call **01872 241955** and listen for the private on-call dentist details. The dentist may be at another practice in Cornwall; fees may apply.

Urgent NHS care: if you cannot reach your dentist, call Smile Together on **0333 405 0290** (Monday-Friday, 8:30am-5pm). Outside these hours, including weekends and bank holidays, call **NHS 111**.

Call 999 or go to A&E for heavy bleeding that will not stop, or severe swelling affecting breathing, swallowing or your eyes. Do not wait for a dental appointment. Local A&E: Royal Cornwall Hospital (Treliske), Truro.