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Post-Operative Instructions for Oral Surgery

Care of the mouth after surgery has an important effect on healing. Swelling, discomfort, slight oozing of blood, and restricted jaw movement may be expected depending on the extent and location of the surgery. These problems need not cause alarm and may be minimized if the following post-operative instructions are followed carefully. PLEASE CONTACT OUR OFFICE FOR ANY PROBLEMS OR QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE.

BLEEDING- It is not unusual to have slight oozing for 24 hours and periodic bleeding for 10 days after an oral surgery procedure. A folded gauze sponge has been placed in the area of surgery prior to you leaving the office. Bite on it with constant, firm pressure. After one hour, remove the gauze. If there is continued bleeding, place a new gauze or moistened tea bag over the area and bite down for 1 more hour. Do not place large bulky gauze packs for it will only put pressure on the adjacent teeth, and not in the area of bleeding. Do not replace the gauze if there is only slight oozing. Remember a drop or two of blood mixed with saliva may seem like a mouth full of blood. Place a towel over your pillow to prevent staining.

AVOID- Smoking, hard foods, using a straw, or vigorously rinsing your mouth on the day of surgery. This may dislodge the blood clot and interrupt the normal course of healing. The morning after surgery, rinse gently with very warm salt water (1/2 teaspoon of salt in a glass of warm water). Repeat every few hours, especially after meals, for 3-4 days.

SWELLING- Swelling will be at its greatest 2 days after surgery, and then the swelling will slowly decrease. To minimize swelling, place an ice pack to the side of the face that was operated on as soon as you arrive home. Apply cold for 20 minutes, off for 10 minutes, and continue this cycle for 2-3 hours.

PAIN- Discomfort or pain can be expected. Tightness of the muscles (trismus), or bruising may occur. Medication will be prescribed to make you more comfortable. Call or come in for severe pain lasting more than 3 days. Remember, pain medication may take an hour or so to take effect and may only work for 3-4 hours. It is therefore important to try to keep ahead of anticipated pain. The full dose of pain medication every 3-4 hours will be much more beneficial than smaller amounts taken more frequently.

NAUSEA- Nausea may accompany the discomfort during the initial postoperative period. Small sips of tea, 7Up, or ginger ale may help.