

Going home after your dental surgery (tooth extraction, oral surgery or biopsy)

The aim of this leaflet is to answer some of the questions you may have about going home after your dental surgery. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

Pain

It is normal for you to have some pain after your surgery. This normally decreases over the first few days after surgery. The severity of pain can vary and depends on the type of surgery performed, your response to pain killers and your individual pain tolerance. We do not prescribe pain killers routinely and would advise you to purchase over-the-counter medicine. The most effective pain killers for dental surgery are ibuprofen and paracetamol, which can be used in combination.

Swelling

After surgery, swelling of the mouth is normal, even for simple procedures. Swelling will tend to increase over the first 48 hours and last for a further five to seven days before resolving. It is a normal part of the healing process and does not mean you have an infection in the immediate post-surgery period. Swelling may be visible outside the mouth and may be associated with bruising.

Stitches

If stitches have been placed in your mouth as part of your surgery, these will normally dissolve away. This can take up to two weeks. It is possible that stitches may come loose or be lost immediately after surgery, this does not normally cause a problem. If we have used non-dissolving stitches these will need to be removed either at a follow up appointment or by your local dentist or doctor.

Infection

There is normally a very low risk of infection after oral surgery procedures and as a result of this, plus evidence of increasing risk of resistance to antibiotics, we do not routinely prescribe antibiotics.

From the day **after** your surgery, you can help avoid infection by rinsing your mouth with warm salt water (one teaspoon of salt in a glass of warm water, and remember to spit the water out). This should not be started until eight hours after your treatment. It should be done at least four times a day for four to five days. You should **not** rinse your mouth out on the day of surgery as this may wash out the blood clot and delay healing.

If you have had an extraction and you suspect there is an infection in the socket, the pain and swelling will usually become worse about four to six days after surgery. If you are concerned then contact the Oral Surgery Department or your local dentist for further advice (contact details can be found at the end of this leaflet).

Bleeding

If bleeding occurs, take one of the gauze packs provided, moisten it lightly, place over the socket and bite firmly for at least 15 minutes or until the bleeding stops. See the emergencies section below for advice about what to do if the bleeding does not stop. The presence of blood staining of your saliva is normal for a few days after surgery.

Dry socket

This is a relatively common problem following tooth extraction. It is more likely in patients who smoke and/or those who are taking the contraceptive pill. The problem usually occurs about two days after the tooth has been removed with increasing pain, a foul taste and bad breath. This is treated by careful washing of the socket and placement of an antiseptic dressing by either our emergency team or your local dentist. This is not treated with antibiotics.

Adjacent teeth/fillings/crowns

It is relatively common for teeth next to the extraction socket to be tender or more sensitive to food and drink after surgery. This can sometimes be helped by use of de-sensitising tooth pastes. If the adjacent teeth are weak due to decay, large fillings or crowns, these may break during or immediately after surgery. If this occurs you will need to ask your local dentist to examine and treat the problem.

General

Be careful when eating or drinking in the first few hours after surgery as you may be numb from the anaesthetic and can easily bite or burn yourself.

You may find eating solid foods uncomfortable for a day or so. A soft diet can be easier to cope with during this time. In addition to the warm-salt mouthwashes, it is important that you still brush your teeth as normal, but be gentle around the site of the surgery.

Please avoid vigorous exercise for a few days after surgery.

Time off work

Most patients do not require time off work after oral surgery. However if the surgery is extensive or you suffer complications you may be required to take time off. We will normally warn you if time off work is likely to be needed but it is not possible for us to predict how long this should be as it varies to a large degree.

Emergencies

In cases where bleeding does not stop and you have tried the suggestions in this leaflet, or any other difficulty, contact your usual dentist. If you are unable to contact your usual dentist, contact Guy's and St Thomas' services using the contact details given in the box below or attend your local Emergency Department (A&E).

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about please contact the Oral Surgery Department on **020 7188 3885** (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday).

For emergencies outside normal working hours contact your local accident and Emergency Department.

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

t: 020 7188 8815 **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, and to become a member:

t: 0800 731 0319 **e:** members@gstt.nhs.uk **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership

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