



Royal Cornwall Hospitals  
NHS Trust

# Following your wisdom tooth extraction



One + all | we care

## **How long will it take to heal?**

Depending on whether the extraction was simple or a surgical procedure the healing process can take between a week to a month.

## **How long will I be numb?**

- You may be numb for up to four hours. During this time, take care not to bite or burn your lips and tongue.
- There is a risk of temporary or permanent numbness due to the proximity (closeness) of the nerve to the wisdom tooth. This can affect the tongue, lower lip, teeth, gums and skin overlying the side of the jaw.
- Normal sensation usually returns in a couple of weeks but can take up to six months. On rare occasions the altered sensation is permanent.

## **Will I have any pain?**

You may experience some discomfort. Before the local anaesthetic wears off, take painkillers to create a pain barrier. Take regularly for as long as required.

A combination of ibuprofen and paracetamol is advised. Take these alternately so there is always a form of painkiller working at its maximum. Follow the dosage instructions on the packet. Only take this combination if they do not conflict with any medical conditions or allergies.

## **Will I have any swelling?**

Yes, it is normal to have swelling inside your mouth near the socket and to have difficulty

opening your mouth – this may result in very minimal mouth opening.

The worst swelling will be 48-72 hours after the operation and commonly affects cheeks and under the jaw, which become very swollen and in some cases bruising is apparent.

Use cold packs and ibuprofen to help reduce the swelling as these are anti-inflammatory. It can take up to two weeks for the swelling to fully resolve.

### **How do I prevent and stop any bleeding?**

Avoid hot drinks, alcohol, rinsing your mouth and physical exertion for 24 hours following your surgery.

To stop any bleeding:

1. Find the bleeding point.
2. Dampen the gauze or towel in water.
3. Apply pressure directly on the bleeding point with a finger or bite firmly for **15 minutes**.
4. If the bleeding slows but is still present, repeat this process.
5. If after four attempts the bleeding hasn't slowed call the Oral Surgery department (see end of leaflet).

### **How can I keep my mouth clean?**

The cleaner your mouth is kept, the quicker the healing process.

- Use a warm salty mouth wash 24 hours after your surgery:

- remove any obvious food debris present in the socket(s) after meals
- dissolve 1 teaspoon of table salt into a glass of warm water
- take a mouthful and gently bathe the socket(s) for 2 minutes, then spit out
- repeat at 2 hourly intervals for 3-4 days and after every meal for 7-10 days.
- Brush your teeth – return to normal brushing after 24 hours.
- Do not smoke – it is recommended not to smoke for as long as possible following surgery, and for a minimum of 24 hours. If you smoke you increase the risk of complications.

### **Do the stitches need to be taken out?**

No. If you have stitches present they will dissolve in 10-14 days following surgery.

### **The socket feels 'sharp' – is that normal?**

Yes. The soft tissues and gum heal very quickly in comparison to the bone. It is common to have a sharp edge until the bone resorbs and becomes smooth. This can take 3-6 months.

Sometimes there are small mobile pieces of bone around the socket. In this case continue as normal and these will either resorb or work to the surface and come out.

### **Are there any possible complications in the healing?**

The socket may take a little longer to heal if it becomes dry or infected.

### **Dry socket:**

- the blood clot within the socket has been lost
- occurs 3-4 days following the surgery
- causes a bad taste and/or smell from the socket
- prevent by using the warm salty mouth wash 24 hours after the surgery
- prevent by removing any food debris within the socket only 24 hours after the surgery.

### **Infected socket:**

- occurs most commonly at least 7 days following surgery
- causes a disturbed taste
- white/ yellow discharge (pus) may be present within or next to the socket
- persistent or increased swelling and pain of the cheek and under the lower jaw.

In both of these cases you need to attend an emergency appointment with your own dentist or local emergency dental services.

If you have a temperature and feel unwell with all the symptoms of an **infected socket** please contact the oral surgery department.

### **Contact us**

Emergency dental helpline: **0333 405 0290**

Oral surgery department (9am-5pm Monday to Friday): **01872 253980**

Outside of these hours please call:  
**01872 250000** and ask for the on-call  
Max Fax SHO

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