

Your recovery after a tooth extraction

What to expect day by day, what to eat and when to call us. Based on guidance from the ADA, AAOMS and the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

The 5 rules for the first 24 hours

- 1 Bite on the gauze**
Firm pressure on a damp gauze pad stops the bleeding and helps the clot form.
- 2 Cold on the outside**
A cold pack on your cheek for 10 to 20 minutes at a time, always wrapped in a cloth.
- 3 No suction**
No straws and no forceful spitting: suction can dislodge the clot.
- 4 Zero tobacco**
Don't smoke or use tobacco. It is the clearest risk factor for dry socket.
- 5 Soft and lukewarm**
Chew on the other side, soft and lukewarm foods. Nothing hard or crunchy.

WHY IT MATTERS

1–5%

of routine extractions develop dry socket

up to 30%

after surgical removal of wisdom teeth

3×

higher odds if you smoke

Day by day

First hours

Keep firm pressure on the gauze and change it if it soaks through. Numbness takes a few hours to wear off: be careful not to bite your lip or cheek. Rest and avoid exertion.

Day 1

No rinsing or forceful spitting, no straws, no smoking. Cold pack on your cheek in 10–20 minute intervals. Soft, lukewarm food. Take medicines exactly as your dentist directed.

Days 2–3

Some swelling and discomfort is normal. From the day after, gently brush your other teeth without touching the wound with the brush or your tongue. Avoid strenuous exercise.

Days 3–7

Pain should ease a little each day. From day 3 you can rinse gently, and your dentist may ask you to flush the socket with salt water. Keep avoiding hard and crunchy food for one week.

Week 2

Ease back into your normal diet as you feel comfortable. If you had stitches, they may loosen: that is normal and they dissolve on their own. Go to your follow-up if one was scheduled.

♦ Keep this guide on the fridge or next to your medicines.

What to eat

Yes, from day one

Yogurt, mashed potatoes, lukewarm soups, avocado, bananas, oatmeal, scrambled eggs, smoothies (with a spoon, not a straw).

Better wait

Very hot drinks on day one.
Alcohol while you take medicines.

Avoid for one week

Hard and crunchy: nuts, peanuts, chips, crusty bread, small seeds and popcorn.

Safe oral hygiene

- Brush and floss your other teeth from the next day, or when your dentist tells you.
- Don't touch the wound with the brush or your tongue for at least 3 days.
- Rinse and spit gently starting on day 3.
- If your dentist prescribes a chlorhexidine rinse, use it: it lowers the risk of dry socket (Cochrane 2022).

Medicines and rest

- Take pain relievers and antibiotics exactly as your dentist directed. If you were prescribed an antibiotic, finish it.
- If you take blood thinners or other medicines that affect clotting, tell us before the extraction.
- Avoid strenuous physical activity for the first few days.
- Don't drink alcohol while taking pain medicines or antibiotics.

Dry socket: how to recognize it

It happens when the clot is lost or breaks down and the bone is exposed. It is not life-threatening, but it hurts and is simple to treat in the office.

- Severe pain that starts a few days after the extraction instead of easing.
- Pain spreading to the ear, eye, temple or neck on the same side.
- Bad taste or bad breath.
- Bone visible in the socket.

Call us if you notice

- Fever or chills.
- Swelling that keeps growing, or pus at the site.
- Heavy bleeding that doesn't stop several hours later.
- Pain that gets worse over the days.
- A rash or hives.

(305) 787-3642

Call 911 if: You have trouble breathing or swallowing, or chest pain.

General patient information. Always follow your dentist's instructions: they may vary depending on your case and the type of extraction.

Sources: MedlinePlus, NIH: "Tooth extraction," 2024 · AAOMS (MyOMS): "Dry socket" and "Proper oral care after dentoalveolar surgery" · ADA MouthHealthy: "Extractions" · Cochrane, Daly et al. 2022: preventing dry socket · Kuśnierek et al., Dentistry Journal 2022: smoking and dry socket.