

Post-Operative Care for Dental Implant Surgery

Wound Care

- Avoid disturbing the surgical site. Do not rinse, spit, or touch the area on the day of your surgery. Your dental implant may have a **healing abutment** visible through your gums. This abutment will eventually be removed once your prosthesis is ready. If it's not in place, the implant will likely be uncovered in 3-4 months during a minor local anesthesia procedure.

Diet

- Stay well-hydrated but avoid hot beverages on the day of surgery. Stick to soft foods, especially while the local anesthetic is still active. For the first 5 days, avoid rough or hard foods like crusty breads, bagels, or sharp chips, as these may damage the incision. After approximately 2 weeks, the tissue around the implant will have healed enough that regular foods won't harm the site.

Swelling

- Swelling is a common side effect. To reduce swelling, apply the provided ice packs or a plastic bag with ice to the cheek near the surgical site for the first 36 hours. Ice is most effective if kept on consistently. Swelling tends to peak 48 hours post-op, and some redness may appear around days 3 or 4. If **BMP (bone morphogenetic protein)** was used, a second round of swelling may occur around the sixth day, which is normal.

Bleeding

- Some light bleeding or pink saliva is normal for up to 24 hours after surgery. If you experience excessive bleeding, place a gauze pad directly on the wound and bite down gently for 10 minutes. Avoid disturbing the gauze during this time. If bleeding persists, contact your dentist for further assistance.

Sutures

- Your sutures will dissolve on their own. Typically, plain gut sutures dissolve in about 6 days, while chromic gut sutures take 10-14 days to dissolve.

Pain Management

- Start taking pain medication as soon as the local anesthesia begins to wear off. For moderate pain, you can take 1-2 Tylenol or Extra Strength Tylenol every 3-4 hours. Ibuprofen (Advil® or Motrin®) is often more effective and can be taken instead—2-3 tablets (400-600 mg) every 3-4 hours as needed. For severe pain, use the prescribed narcotic medication as directed. Avoid combining aspirin with Ibuprofen or Aleve (Naproxen), and only take medications you're not allergic to or that your doctor has approved.

Oral Hygiene

- Good oral hygiene is crucial for healing. You can also rinse with warm salt water (1 teaspoon of salt in a cup of warm water) 4-5 times a day, especially after meals. Brushing is safe, but be gentle around the surgical area, using the softest toothbrush available.

Healing Abutment Loosening

- The healing abutment is screwed onto the implant but can sometimes loosen or come off. If this happens and it remains loose for more than 1 day, your gums might grow beneath it, requiring a minor procedure to trim the gums and replace it. If the abutment loosens in the first 3-6 weeks, we may wait for more bone healing before uncovering the implant and reattaching the abutment. The implant will still be secure even without the abutment in place.

Exercise

- Limit physical activity right after surgery, as it can lead to throbbing or bleeding. Also, keep in mind that your body may be weak from the lack of proper nourishment, limiting your ability to exercise. If no bone graft was performed, you can usually resume light exercise the day after surgery, as long as you feel up to it.

Wearing Prostheses

- Partial dentures, flippers, or full dentures can be used after surgery once they've been adjusted by your dentist so they don't put pressure on the wound. Bring your prostheses to all consultations and surgery appointments for fitting and necessary adjustments.

Post-Operative Mood Changes

- Some patients may experience mild depression or mood swings on days 4-5 after surgery, particularly if steroids (such as Decadron) were used to control swelling. These steroids can cause a temporary energy boost initially but may lead to feelings of lethargy, irritability, or heightened pain sensitivity later. These symptoms generally resolve by day 6 or 7.