

# Post Operative Instructions for Dry Socket

## What is a Dry socket?

Dry socket is an infection in your tooth socket after a tooth is extracted. The condition usually develops when a blood clot fails to form in the socket or if the blood clot comes loose. Normally, the blood clot that forms after a tooth is removed promotes healing, laying the foundation for the growth of new bone tissue. Dry socket occurs in approximately five percent of all extractions.

You may not have symptoms until three to five days after the extraction. The condition will manifest itself as severe pain that doesn't subside, often accompanied by what feels like an earache. You may also have an unpleasant taste in your mouth and bad breath.

## Causes of Dry Socket

Several things can cause the premature loss of a blood clot from an extraction site:

- smoking
- forceful spitting
- sucking through a straw
- coughing or sneezing.
- consuming carbonated or alcoholic beverages after an extraction, as these have also been associated with the development of dry socket.

## Prevention

- Keep your fingers and tongue away from the extraction site.
- Apply an ice pack to your jaw for the first 24 hours following surgery - on for 20 minutes, and off for 20 minutes - to prevent pain and swelling and stop excessive bleeding.
- Do not rinse your mouth the day of surgery. The next day, you can rinse gently with warm salt water; dissolve one teaspoon of salt in a cup of warm water. Be sure to rinse and spit gently.

## Treatment

Call our office right away if you notice any symptoms of dry socket. Treatment for dry socket typically includes a gentle rinsing of the socket, packing it with a topical anesthetic called dry socket paste and a sterile gauze dressing. You will need to return to our office every 2-3 days for us to change the dressing until the blood starts to clot in the extraction site.