

# Post-Operative Instructions – Oral Surgery

Alpine Valley Oral Surgery • Boulder & Wheat Ridge

**CALL US IMMEDIATELY IF ANY OF THESE OCCUR**

- Bleeding that does not stop after repeated firm pressure (gauze/tea bag)
- Severe or worsening pain after day 3–5 (possible dry socket)
- Fever  $\geq 101^{\circ}\text{F}$ , chills, worsening swelling after day 3, pus/drainage, foul odor/taste
- Rash/hives, lip/tongue swelling, difficulty breathing or swallowing (possible allergy)
- Numbness of lip/chin/tongue lasting  $> 24$  hours or worsening

**Emergency Line: (303) 604-9393**

These instructions are general; not all items apply to every procedure. When in doubt, follow these guidelines or call us.

## What to Do When

Day of Surgery (0–24 hrs)	Days 2–3	Days 4–7+
Control bleeding • rest • ice • no rinsing/spitting/straws • soft/cool diet • start pain plan	Swelling may peak • begin salt-water rinses • gentle brushing • light activity as tolerated	Gradual improvement daily • continue hygiene • watch for dry socket • resume activity gradually

## Bleeding & Gauze (The First Hour Matters)

A blood clot must form for proper healing. Most bleeding problems are due to gauze not pressing directly on the site.

- **Keep gauze in place** with gentle but firm pressure for **30–60 minutes**. Replace with clean gauze as needed.
- If bleeding is heavy while you are biting, the gauze may be in the wrong position. **Remove gauze** → **reposition over the surgical site** → **bite firmly 30–60 minutes**. Repeat if needed.
- A **cold, damp black tea bag** can be used instead of gauze. Bite with firm pressure for **30–45 minutes**.
- **Do not eat, drink, or sleep with gauze in your mouth.**
- Oozing/pink saliva is common for up to **24 hours** (longer if on blood thinners). Stop gauze when bleeding has largely subsided.

## Pain Control

Begin pain medication **before numbness wears off**. Take medication with food to reduce nausea.

- If medically allowed: use **ibuprofen** (Advil®/Motrin®) and/or **acetaminophen** (Tylenol®) as directed by your surgeon.
- Do not take these medications if you are allergic, have been told to avoid them, or they interfere with other medicines.
- If a narcotic was prescribed, use only as directed. **No driving or machinery** while taking narcotics. **No alcohol** with narcotics or antibiotics.

## Antibiotics & Medication Reactions

- Not all surgeries require antibiotics. If prescribed, take as directed and finish the course unless told otherwise.
- Stop the antibiotic and call us if you develop **rash, severe diarrhea, or itching**.
- Seek emergency care immediately for lip/tongue swelling, wheezing, or difficulty breathing/swallowing.

## Swelling & Bruising

- Swelling is normal and typically peaks at **48–72 hours** (often day 3). Bruising/discoloration can appear 24–48 hours after surgery.
- Use **cold compresses** for the first **24–48 hours** (20–30 minutes on / 20–30 minutes off while awake).
- After 48 hours, switch to **warm compresses** (20–30 minutes on / 20–30 minutes off) to help swelling and bruising resolve.
- Sleep with your head elevated on 2 pillows for the first 2 nights (or longer if swelling is significant).

## Oral Hygiene: Rinsing, Spitting, Brushing

- **No rinsing** for the first 24 hours (protects the clot).
- Starting the next day: warm salt-water rinses after meals and before bed for 1 week (1 tsp salt in 8 oz warm water). Rinse gently—do not swish aggressively.
- **Do not spit** and **do not use straws** (suction can disturb the clot).
- Begin gentle brushing the next day. Avoid vigorous brushing near the surgical site on day 1; resume normal hygiene as comfort allows.
- If a prescription rinse (e.g., Peridex/CHX) was provided, use as directed.

## Irrigation Syringe (If Provided)

Food can collect in lower extraction sites as sockets heal from the bottom up.

- If you were given a syringe, follow your surgeon's timing. Commonly: **start day 3–7** depending on the procedure.
- Use warm water (or salt water) and gently flush the socket after meals.
- It is normal to feel a "hole" where the tooth was removed; it will gradually close over **3–4 weeks**.
- **Do NOT irrigate a site with a bone graft** unless specifically instructed—early irrigation can disturb the graft/clot.

## Post-Operative Instructions (continued)

### Diet & Hydration

- A balanced diet helps you heal faster. **Do not skip meals.**
- For the first 24 hours: cool/room-temperature liquids and soft foods that are easy to swallow.
- Advance to more solid foods over the next few days as tolerated. Avoid chewing directly on the surgical side.
- Avoid hard, crunchy, grainy, seedy, or spicy foods that can lodge in the site (nuts, seeds, popcorn, chips, rice, corn).
- Avoid hot foods/beverages until numbness wears off and bleeding is controlled.

### Soft Diet Examples (First 24–48 Hours)

- Yogurt (no fruit chunks), applesauce, pudding/custard, Jell-O® (no fruit pieces)
- Mashed potatoes, soft pasta/mac & cheese, scrambled eggs, soups (lukewarm)
- Smoothies, protein/Ensure shakes, cottage cheese, ice cream/frozen yogurt

### Nausea & Lightheadedness

- Nausea can occur from anesthesia or taking medication on an empty stomach. **Take meds with food.**
- Try sipping ginger ale or cola every 30 minutes until nausea improves; crackers may help.
- Stand up slowly. Sit for a minute before standing to prevent fainting.
- Call us if nausea persists or you cannot keep fluids down.

### Activity & Rest

- Rest the day of surgery. Limit activity for the first 24–48 hours.
- Avoid heavy lifting, bending over, strenuous exercise for several days (or as instructed).
- If exercise causes throbbing or bleeding, stop and rest. Resume normal activity when diet and energy are back to normal.

### Smoking, Vaping & Alcohol

- Avoid smoking/vaping and chewing tobacco for **at least 1 week**. Longer is better, and bone graft sites often require longer restrictions.
- Avoid alcohol while taking antibiotics or narcotic pain medication.
- Avoid carbonated beverages for **5 days** if instructed.

### Stitches & Common (Usually Normal) Findings

- Most sutures dissolve or fall out on their own within **2–10 days**. It is safe if you swallow them.
- Jaw stiffness and limited opening for a few days is common and improves with time.
- Sharp bony edges or small bone fragments may be felt as the area heals; leave them alone. Call us if they cause discomfort.
- A mild elevated temperature can occur. Call us if fever is  $\geq 101^{\circ}\text{F}$  or lasts more than 24 hours.

### Dry Socket (Alveolitis)

Dry socket typically occurs **3–5 days** after an extraction when the clot is lost. Pain often worsens rather than improves and may radiate to the ear or jaw.

- Risk is reduced by: no smoking/vaping, no straws, gentle rinsing only, good oral hygiene.
- If you suspect dry socket, call our office. A medicated dressing may be needed.

### **If You Had IV Sedation**

- Do not drive or operate machinery for **24 hours**.
- Do not drink alcohol, take sleep aids/tranquilizers, or use non-prescribed drugs for 24 hours.
- Do not sign important documents or make major decisions for 24 hours.
- Have a responsible adult stay with you for the first 24 hours.

## Extraction With Bone Grafting (Socket Preservation)

### CALL US IMMEDIATELY IF ANY OF THESE OCCUR

- Profuse bleeding that cannot be controlled with direct pressure
- Increasing swelling after day 3 or swelling affecting swallowing/breathing
- Fever  $\geq 101^{\circ}\text{F}$  or foul drainage/pus from the site
- Concern for allergic reaction (rash, sudden swelling, difficulty breathing)

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These instructions apply when grafting material was placed to help preserve your jawbone for future implant placement.

### Immediately Following Surgery

- Keep gauze in place for **30 minutes**, then remove and discard. At home, use firm biting pressure with fresh gauze until bleeding stops.
- Avoid vigorous rinsing and avoid touching the wound area on the day of surgery.
- Take recommended pain medication as soon as possible—ideally before numbness wears off.
- Restrict activity the day of surgery; resume normal activity when comfortable.

### Bone Graft–Specific Notes

- **Granules/grains of bone:** Small particles may come out into your mouth. This is normal. We place more than enough graft material.
- **Membrane:** A small membrane may cover the graft initially; it is normal if you see/feel it come out after the first few days.
- **No pressure:** Do not press on the graft site with your tongue or fingers, and do not pull your lip to “check” the site.
- **Soft diet:** Avoid chewing hard foods on the graft site; chew on the opposite side for about **2 weeks**.
- **No smoking:** Do not smoke or vape for at least **2 weeks**. Smoking can cause graft failure.

### Bleeding (With Bone Grafting)

- Slight bleeding/oozing is expected. Bleeding usually resolves within a few hours; pink saliva may persist up to 24 hours.
- For excessive bleeding: remove old clots gently, place fresh gauze directly over the site, and bite firmly for **30 minutes**. Repeat as needed.
- If excessive bleeding continues, bite on a moistened black tea bag for **30 minutes**. Repeat as necessary.
- Repeated gauze use when bleeding is only mild can delay clotting and prolong bleeding.

### Swelling

- Swelling may increase and peak over the next few days; it typically improves within 1–2 weeks.
- Ice packs: 20 minutes on / 20 minutes off for the first 24 hours as tolerated.
- Sleep with head elevated for the first few days to reduce swelling.
- Bruising can occur, especially if you take blood thinners, and usually improves over several days.

## Diet

- Soft foods and liquids the first day. Avoid hot foods and hot liquids while numb.
- Avoid straws and avoid spitting (suction can dislodge clot and graft particles).
- Advance diet as tolerated. Chew away from the graft site for ~2 weeks.

## Oral Hygiene

- Do not rinse the day of surgery. Begin gentle warm salt-water rinses the next day for 1 week.
- Resume brushing/flossing after 24 hours as tolerated, but **avoid brushing directly on the graft site** for ~2 weeks.
- Vigorous rinsing can increase bleeding and may dislodge graft particles.

## Activity & Other Considerations

- Avoid strenuous exercise/heavy lifting (>20 lbs) for ~3 days; early activity can increase bleeding, swelling, and graft particle loss.
- Nausea: if vomiting occurs, pause intake for 1 hour then sip ginger ale/tea/cola slowly. Call if persistent.
- Sutures usually dissolve in 5–7 days. If they fall out early, do not panic—call if you have concerns.

## Sinus Bone Graft (Sinus Augmentation) – Aftercare

### CALL US IMMEDIATELY IF ANY OF THESE OCCUR

- Air or liquid passing between mouth and nose
- Persistent or worsening sinus congestion on the treated side
- Graft particles coming out in your mouth or nose
- Heavy or persistent nose bleeding, fever  $\geq 101^{\circ}\text{F}$ , or increasing facial swelling after day 3

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A sinus graft adds bone/graft material to the bottom of the maxillary sinus. Healing depends on avoiding pressure changes.

### Sinus Precautions (Very Important)

- **Do not blow your nose** (commonly for 1–3 weeks as directed). If it runs, let it drip and wipe gently.
- If you sneeze or cough, do so with your **mouth open**. Do not “hold in” sneezes.
- Avoid actions that create pressure: **no straws, no spitting, no smoking/vaping**.
- Avoid scuba diving and flying until cleared by your surgeon (pressure changes can affect the graft).
- Avoid heavy lifting, bending over, or strenuous exertion for several days.

### What You May Notice

- Mild sinus congestion for a few days can be normal.
- Intermittent nose bleeding or dark nasal drainage can occur as old blood drains from the sinus (often within the first 1–2 weeks).
- Bruising and swelling are common.

### Medications

- Take antibiotics, decongestants, or other medications as prescribed.
- If you have high blood pressure or take blood pressure medications, confirm with your physician before using decongestants.

### Healing Timeline

- Sinus graft maturation typically takes **3–6 months** before implant placement (timing varies by case).
- Your surgeon will advise the timing of follow-up visits and next steps.

**Questions?** We are here to help. If you are unsure about an instruction or feel something is not improving, call us anytime.

#### Alpine Valley Oral Surgery

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