

Mouth care after surgery



Information for patients

This leaflet aims to help you understand what you can expect after having mouth surgery and contains answers to many commonly asked questions. If you have any other questions or would like further explanation, please ask.

What did the surgery involve?

You will probably have had your gum cut and lifted away from the underlying bone. This is known as 'raising a flap'. It is done to uncover a root, or a tooth, which has been difficult to extract or to identify and remove something in your jawbone, such as a small cyst. Some bone will probably have been drilled away and your gum will have been stitched up.

What should I do after the surgery?

- Do not rinse or spit for the rest of the day because this can make your wound bleed. Also, do not suck or put your tongue into the hole.
- The next day, gently rinse out your mouth using warm, salty water or a mouthwash. In particular, do this after you eat to prevent food sticking to your stitches or wound.
- Avoid physical exertion for the first 24 hours because this can also make your wound bleed.
- Take your painkillers as directed by your dentist.

What problems might occur?

- Your wound will be sore for two or three days. Please take the pain-killing drugs your dentist has advised as directed.
- Infection is rare. You will not normally be prescribed antibiotics.
- You may have a slight oozing from your wound and a bad taste. This often happens for a few days but does not mean there is a problem.
- If your wound bleeds, roll up some gauze (not tissue) or a clean handkerchief into a pad, dampen and place over the area that is bleeding and bite down firmly for 10 minutes. If you are still bleeding when you remove the pad, repeat this procedure for 15 minutes. If you are still bleeding after doing this, please contact the department and arrange to return so that we can help you.



If it is after 4.30pm, or over the weekend, please ring the hospital and ask to speak with the on-call doctor for Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery.

- Your teeth next to where you have had your treatment may feel tender for a few days. This is normal.
- You may have some facial swelling over the operation site and after some procedures you may notice that the feeling in your skin alters slightly.
- If you have had an operation on your lower jaw it is likely to be stiff and you will find it difficult to open your mouth. This will gradually improve but may take up to three weeks.

Is there anything else I should know?

- You will be given dissolvable stitches which do not need to be removed. They might take up to two weeks to dissolve, sometimes longer.
- Your saliva and tongue will be speckled with blood, which is normal.
- Be careful when you are eating or drinking hot drinks while your face and gums are still numb so you do not accidentally bite or burn your lips.
- Dry socket can occur when the protective blood clot in the socket is lost early after a tooth removal. It is not uncommon and presents as increasing pain a few days after an extraction. It rarely requires antibiotics, and can usually be treated by a wash out and dressing by us or your local dentist.



Who can I contact with queries and concerns?

Monday to Friday between 9am and 4.30pm call **020 3299 2620** for Oral Surgery or **020 3299 1681** for Special Care Dentistry.

Department of Oral Surgery

King's College London Dental Institute

King's College Hospital, Bessemer Road, London SE5 9RS

After 4.30pm and at weekends please contact NHS 111 and ask for emergency dental care. The 111 Service can provide urgent help and advice, in non-life-threatening situations. It is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and can offer appointment slots across London at short notice with emergency dentists.

Or call King's College Hospital switchboard on **020 3299 9000** and ask to speak to the member of staff on call for Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. They can also pass on praise or thanks to our teams.

PALS at King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS

Tel: **020 3299 4618**

Email: **kings.pals@nhs.net**

If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact our Interpreting and Accessible Communication Support on 020 3299 4618 or email kings.access@nhs.net