Wisdom teeth removed: What do I do now? [1]

Dear Alice,

I just had all four of my wisdom teeth removed yesterday. My mouth is very sore, swollen, and I can't open my mouth without hurting. I am taking medicine for the pain. I would like to know any tips that you have to speed up my healing process.

Thanks,
On the Mend

Answer

Dear On the Mend,

Ouch! It's no fun to get your wisdom teeth yanked out, and the mending process takes a bit of time and extra care. It'll help to know what to expect during these early days and later on, as healing progresses. Luckily, there are tried and true ways to lessen the pain and aid in the healing process.

**During the first 24 hours:**

- Take the day off from work, school, or other obligations. Get as much rest as possible. It might also be helpful to enlist the help of a friend or relative during this time.
- To control the pain that you may feel in your face and mouth, you can continue taking the medication that your health care provider prescribed. For minor pain, some people prefer to use acetaminophen or ibuprofen.
- If you notice some puffiness around where your teeth were removed, you can ice your cheeks (on the outside) for ten minutes at a time, leaving at least twenty minutes in between icings ? this should help bring the swelling down and lessen some of the pain.
- Once the initial bleeding has stopped and the clots have taken hold in the tooth sockets, you might be ready to eat. To protect the clots, it's best not to chew in those areas at all. Steer clear of hot liquids, alcohol, and caffeine, but make sure to drink plenty of clear liquids to stay hydrated. Try sticking to a liquid diet or soft foods. With liquids, it's best not to use straws because the suction could dislodge your clots.

**After the first 24 hours:**

- If your face is still puffy, try applying a warm, moist towel for twenty minutes at a time (and twenty minutes off).
- You can probably brush your teeth now, but avoid areas around your surgery for about
one week or until you notice much less pain and significant healing.

- Rinsing in the morning, after meals, and before bed with warm saltwater (one half teaspoon of salt per one cup of water) is a great way to prevent infection. Avoid commercial mouthwashes until you’ve completely healed; these are known to irritate new extraction sites.
- Unfortunately, the actual act of eating may be challenging for at least the first week. You might want to keep having liquids and soft foods while slowly adding foods that you can chew with your front teeth. Watch out for nuts, seeds, rice, and other small morsels, which can get lodged in hard-to-reach places.

With a little patience and careful attention to your mouth, you should get back to normal in the near future.

Feel better soon,

Alice!

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