

POST OP INSTRUCTIONS - DRY SOCKET

Dry socket is a common complication after a tooth extraction, particularly molar tooth extractions. When a tooth is removed, the socket is the space remaining. After extraction, a blood clot forms over the socket and is essential for proper healing. If the blood clot fails to form properly or gets dislodged prematurely, a condition known as dry socket develops. The socket has a dry appearance and looks empty.

If dry socket develops, you will know it – it is extremely painful! The pain occurs because without the protective layer from the blood clot, bone tissue is exposed. Bone tissue is extremely sensitive, especially when exposed to air.

The exact cause of a dry socket is unknown. Sometimes they develop for no apparent reason. However, there are several factors that increase your chance of developing a dry socket:

- Difficult extraction
- Trauma to the tissue during a difficult extraction can affect the formation of the blood clot
- Bone or root fragments left after surgery
- Sometimes very small bone fragments or root fragments are left in the socket, especially after a difficult extraction
- These fragments can interfere with the formation of the blood clot
- Infection in the socket
- Bacteria interferes with proper blood clot formation
- Smoking, drinking through a straw or spitting
- The drawing action of sucking in, and the force applied when spitting, can dislodge the blood clot. Sneezing and coughing can also dislodge a blood clot
- Hard, crunchy, or sticky foods
- Hard or crunchy foods can displace the blood clot. Sticky foods can pull the protective clot right out of the socket
- Brushing and forceful rinsing

For the first 24 hours after the tooth extraction, don't brush around the extraction site or rinse forcefully. The first 24 to 48 hours after surgery is the most critical time to develop a dry socket. However, a dry socket can develop any time within the first 7 days after surgery.

If a dry socket develops, see your dentist immediately. The dentist will clean the socket, remove any debris and then pack the socket with a medicated dressing. The medicated dressing relieves the pain and aids in healing. Home care instructions will be given to you to promote the healing process.