Redwood Pediatric Dentistry
Dr. Niekia Franklin, DDS, MSD • 4100 Redwood Rd., Suite 7A, Oakland, CA • (510) 413-7600

After-Visit Guide: Tooth Extraction

Your child did great today! Most kids feel back to normal within a few days. Follow these simple steps to keep them comfortable and help healing go smoothly.

1 The First 24 Hours

- **Gauze pad:** Bite gently on the gauze if your child is comfortable with it. It is not required for most extractions, and minor oozing is completely normal.
- **Cold compress (optional):** If your child is OK with it, wrap a cold pack in a cloth and place it on the outside of the cheek, 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off. Some kids find this uncomfortable, so no pressure!
- **Rest and take it easy:** Keep the head slightly elevated when lying down if possible. A towel over the pillow can prevent staining, and hydrogen peroxide removes most blood stains if needed.
- **No straws, rinsing, or hard spitting:** Vigorous action can disturb the clot. Light rinsing is fine, but avoid forceful swishing. (Honestly, I have never actually seen a dry socket from a straw, but better to be safe than sorry!)
- **Soft, cool foods only:** yogurt, applesauce, smoothies (without a straw), mashed potatoes. See the Soft Foods Guide for a full list.
- **No smoking or vaping:** hopefully ever, but especially for at least 72 hours. Smoking is one of the leading causes of dry socket.

2 Medications

- **Stay ahead of the pain:** Do not wait until it hurts to take medicine. Give the first dose before the numbing wears off.
- **Ibuprofen or Tylenol:** Alternate them every 2 to 3 hours for the first day (for example, ibuprofen at 8am, Tylenol at 10:30am) at the recommended age-appropriate dose. Time a dose 1 hour before meals and before bed.
  - Ibuprofen (Advil/Motrin) is usually more effective for dental pain as it reduces inflammation.
  - Always follow dosing instructions on the label or as directed by Dr. Franklin.
- **Antibiotics (if prescribed):** Current guidelines typically recommend stopping antibiotics once the tooth is removed. However, some situations require finishing the full course. Dr. Franklin will let you know which applies to your child.

3 Oral Hygiene After Extraction

- **Keep brushing all other teeth normally,** and gently avoid the extraction site for the first few days.
- **Salt water rinse (starting day 2):** If your child notices a funny taste or wants to rinse, mix ½ tsp salt in 8 oz warm water. Swish gently and let it fall out, with no forceful spitting.
- **No toothpick or fingers near the site:** It is tempting to probe, but leave it alone! The clot is fragile in the first 24 to 48 hours.



Call Us Right Away If You Notice...

- Bleeding that does not slow after 30 minutes of gentle pressure
- **Severe pain that worsens** after 2 to 3 days rather than improving. This can be a sign of dry socket.
- Swelling that gets worse after day 3 instead of better
- **Signs of infection:** fever, pus, or a bad smell from the socket
- **Difficulty breathing or swallowing** (go to the ER immediately)

(510) 413-7600 • After hours: **(510) 833-6474**

References

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Bowe DC, Rogers S, Stassen LF. The management of dry socket/alveolar osteitis. J Ir Dent Assoc. 2011;57(6):305-310.

Derry CJ, Derry S, Moore RA. Single dose oral ibuprofen plus paracetamol (acetaminophen) for acute postoperative pain. Cochrane Database Syst Rev. 2013;(6):CD010210.

Lodi G, Azzi L, Varoni EM, et al. Antibiotics to prevent complications following tooth extractions. Cochrane Database Syst Rev. 2021;(2):CD003811.

Disclaimer: All information reflects the clinical approach of Dr. Niekia Franklin and is intended for general guidance only. Instructions given during your visit always take precedence. • www.redwoodpediatricdentist.com