

# Aftercare instructions - dental extractions

## Outpatients Patient information

The aim of this leaflet is to answer common questions about care advice after having dental extractions. If you would like further information, or have any concerns, please see the contact numbers on the back of this leaflet.

### Pain and swelling

When the numbing medicine (local anaesthetic) wears off, your mouth may feel sore. This can happen after **90 minutes to four hours**. It's a good idea to take painkillers like **Paracetamol** or **Ibuprofen** before the numbness wears off, as long as you're not allergic.

You might also notice:

- swelling
- bruising
- jaw ache
- difficulty opening your mouth

These are normal and usually feel worse around **day two**, then get better over **5-7 days**.

### Bleeding

Your dentist will check for bleeding before you go home. Some small bleeding or oozing is normal for the first **24 hours**.

If it starts bleeding again:

1. Roll up a **clean damp cloth or gauze** into a sausage shape.
2. Place it over the area.
3. Bite down firmly for **20 minutes** without stopping.
4. If bleeding continues, try again.
5. Still worried? Call the number on the leaflet

**Tip:** Use a towel on your pillow overnight in case of blood-stained saliva

### Stitches

Sometimes you may have **dissolvable stitches** where the tooth was taken out. These will disappear on their own in a few days to a few weeks.

### Dry socket

Sometimes, the blood clot can come out too early. This leaves the bone exposed and causes a **throbbing pain** that doesn't go away. It's called **dry socket** and can be easily treated by your dentist.

**Avoid smoking or vaping**, as this increases your risk of getting a dry socket.

# Going back to work

You can return to work when you feel ready. This depends on:

- how you feel
- the type of work you do
- how complicated the extraction was

Try to **rest for the day**, avoid bending, lifting heavy things, or doing any exercise

## Looking after your mouth

- For the first **24–48 hours**, eat only soft foods.
- Make sure food and drinks are **not too hot**, especially while you're still numb.
- **Do not rinse or gargle** for the first 24 hours.
- After 24 hours, rinse gently with **warm salt water** (½ teaspoon of salt in 250ml of water) **3-4 times a day**, especially after meals, for **10 days**.
- **Brush your teeth** like normal but be gentle around the area where the tooth was removed.
- **No smoking or vaping** for at least **72 hours**. Smoking can cause pain, slow healing, and increase the risk of infection. Find your nearest NHS Stop Smoking Service from the NHS Smokefree website or call the Smokefree National Helpline on 0300 123 1044. You can also ask for advice about nicotine patches, gum, and other nicotine replacement from your local pharmacy.

If you're unsure about anything, or feel something's not right, please contact us.

## Contact details

Post-operative enquiries

### Outpatients Oral Maxillo-Facial

Tel: **0300 019 2145**

(Monday - Friday 8.30am-5pm)

### Day of Surgery Unit

Tel: **0300 019 2150**

(7.30am-8pm)

### Head and Neck Ward C4

Tel: **0300 019 2415**

---

To read this leaflet in a different language, please visit our website: [www.uhd.nhs.uk/visit/patient-information-leaflets](http://www.uhd.nhs.uk/visit/patient-information-leaflets) and use the language and accessibility function available along the top of the site.

To ask for this leaflet in larger print, please contact the patient experience team on **0300 019 8499** or email [uhd.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net](mailto:uhd.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net).

---

Poole Hospital, Longfleet Road, Poole, Dorset, BH15 2JB

Author: Deborah Ruffell Date: January 2026 Version: One Review date: January 2029 Ref: 144/25

t: 01202 665511 w: [www.uhd.nhs.uk](http://www.uhd.nhs.uk)  @UHDTrust  @uhd\_nhs

**Some of our hospital services are moving.**  
Visit [www.uhd.nhs.uk/future](http://www.uhd.nhs.uk/future) to find out more.