Patient information

East and North Hertfordshire Teaching NHS Trust

Oral surgery (children)

Post-operative advice

The purpose of this leaflet is to help you manage your child's recovery after an operation in the mouth.

Pain relief

Your child can take pain relief such as paracetamol or ibuprofen in a suitable form for children and will likely need pain relief for 1 to 2 weeks after surgery. Paracetamol and ibuprofen are usually required together in the first week after surgery and may be required for a further week.

Wound management and infection prevention

- The wound is liable to infection unless precautions are taken. Your child's nurse will discuss with you actions to help prevent infection.
- Discourage your child from touching the wound or pushing their tongue into the socket (the gap where a tooth has been taken out).
- After the operation, do not encourage your child to rinse out their mouth on the same day as this can dislodge the blood clot and encourage bleeding.
- Warm salt water rinses are advised from the day after surgery to help prevent infection. See page 2 under 'Mouthwashing'.
- Do not brush teeth on the same day after surgery as this can encourage bleeding. Teeth brushing should start the morning after surgery. If your child has an electric toothbrush it would be more comfortable to avoid using this for the first week after surgery, and instead use a soft bristled manual toothbrush. Teeth should be kept clean with brushing teeth twice daily after the day of surgery, this is to avoid infection.
- Keep your child away from any contact sports for 2 weeks after surgery as this may result in reopening of the wound and bleeding and infection. You may be advised to keep your child away from any contact sports for a longer period of time if teeth are found to be mobile or if the wound may require more time for healing. Your surgeon or the nursing staff will advise you if this is the case.

Stitches

- It is not uncommon for stitches to be placed at the time of surgery. If stitches are placed, they are resorbable and will typically break down and fall out on their own in 1 to 2 weeks. Less commonly, the surgeon may need to put stitches that take longer to breakdown (1 month).

- If you are having an exposure of a tooth where a gold chain will be attached to the tooth for the purpose of orthodontic/brace treatment, then the surgeon may also need to place a black stitch. This will not breakdown and will need to be removed by your orthodontist in 2 weeks time, which you will need to arrange. If a gold chain has been attached to a tooth for this purpose, you will have been informed about this before the procedure.

  You are advised to avoid any hard or chewy foods that can be caught in the gold chain as this can cause the gold chain to detach from the tooth. Avoid appying any pressure to the gold chain as this may cause it to detach from the tooth or break and necessitate a further procedure.

Eating and drinking

- Your child should avoid warm and hot liquids and foods, and avoid hard or sharp foods for 24 hours after the operation. If your child has had a local anaesthetic, wait for normal sensation to return before eating or drinking otherwise your child can chew their lip, cheek or tongue without realising.
- Avoid giving your child pizza, toast, crisps and any hard or sharp foods for 2 weeks after surgery. These foods may catch on any stitches and may rip the stitches and injure the wound, encouraging bleeding.
- Advise your child to avoid eating on the site of surgery where possible for 2 weeks to avoid food trapping, bleeding and infection.
- Do encourage your child to drink plenty of water and keep hydrated.

Mouthwashing

Start using warm saltwater mouthwashes the day after surgery if your child is able to:

- Dissolve a teaspoon of salt in 150ml of boiling water and wait for this to cool to a lukewarm temperature.
- Use this as a mouth rinse once the temperature of the mouthwash is lukewarm. **Do not** use when the mouth rinse is boiling hot as this can burn the mouth and encourage bleeding.
- This mouth rinse should be done at least three times daily and after meals as well if possible. This should be done for an entire week after surgery and may be required for a further week. Do not start these rinses until the day **after** surgery.

Bleeding

- Avoid spitting the blood as this will encourage the blood clot to dislodge and encourage further bleeding.
- Mouth rinsing and toothbrushing should be avoided on the day of surgery as this can encourage bleeding.
- Warm and hot food and drink should also be avoided on the day of surgery as this can encourage bleeding.
- Hard and sharp foods should be avoided for 2 weeks after surgery as this can also encourage bleeding.
- Avoid putting fingers in the mouth and touching the wound or pulling the cheeks out to observe the wound which can stretch the wound and possibly rip any stitches that may be in place. These can encourage bleeding or infection and delay healing and should be avoided for 2 weeks after surgery.

Some bleeding after surgery can be expected. Typically, this will involve a few drops of blood that can discolour the saliva in the mouth and appear to be more blood than it actually is. If this occurs, then the blood can be swallowed.

If the bleeding after surgery is persistent and more than a few drops of blood, then encourage your child to rinse out once to remove the clotted blood with cold water and then to bite down on a cold clean damp pad of gauze for up to 30 minutes. The gauze should be folded and applied to the wound/site of bleeding. You will be provided with a pack of gauze to take home with you.

- **Do not use cotton wool** as this can remain on the wound and encourage infection.
- **Do not rinse more than once** as this will encourage further bleeding.
- Keep the head raised, i.e. keep your child in a sitting position. If the bleeding persists despite this, then please contact us for further advice.

Prescription

On occasion, your child may be prescribed medication which we will give you to take home. However, painkillers are typically bought over the counter and not prescribed.

If your child is prescribed an antibiotic, you will need to read the instructions on the label and complete the course of antibiotic. Sometimes you may need to hide the antibiotic in food to allow your child to swallow the antibiotic if they are adverse to tablets and a liquid alternative is not possible.

Sometimes your child may be prescribed chlorhexidine gluconate mouth rinse. You will need to read the instructions on the label and complete the course of mouthwash. This will typically be used as a mouth rinse:

- Start the day after surgery.
- Use 30 minutes after toothbrushing and keep in the mouth for 1 minute.
- Use twice daily for 2 weeks.

Sometimes your child may be prescribed a nasal spray. Use as instructed on the prescription.

Vaping and smoking

Your child should not smoke or vape. If they do, please ensure that vaping and smoking are avoided for at least 2 weeks after surgery as they can increase the risk of delayed healing, wound breakdown and infection.

Specific advice if your child is having surgery in the top jaw

If your child is having a procedure in the top jaw, then you may be advised by the surgeon of the risk of an oroantral communication or fistula; this means a communication between the mouth and nose. If you are advised of this risk then you will also need to ensure that your child avoids nose blowing, smoking or vaping, using a drinking straw, swimming/diving, flying, blowing balloons, stifling sneezes for 6 weeks to avoid a fistula (tract) forming between the nose and mouth which may require further surgery to repair.

General advice

Your child will need to spend a quiet day at home on the day after surgery before returning to school and sporting activities, but there should be no contact sports for 2 weeks after surgery.

It may be helpful for you to assist your child with toothbrushing for a few days after the surgery. It is best to use a small, soft brush in the first days after the operation.

Who can I contact if I am worried about my child?

If you are worried that your child needs further medical attention after oral surgery treatment, please call the oral secretaries at Lister hospital (contact details are below). Office hours are 9am to 4.30pm, Monday to Thursday and 9am to 12.30pm on Friday.

If out of these hours, please contact the Luton and Dunstable Hospital (contact details below).

A member of the Oral Surgery Team is on call 24 hours a day at Luton and Dunstable Hospital.

Useful contact details

East and North Hertfordshire Teaching NHS Trust:

- Website www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk
- Telephone 01438 314333

Bluebell Ward, Lister Hospital:

- Telephone 01438 284008

Oral Secretaries, Lister Hospital:

- Telephone 01438 284060

Luton and Dunstable Hospital:

- Telephone 01582 491166 - Ask for the Oral and Maxillofacial Senior House Officer on call who is contactable by bleep number 777.

Leaflet information

You can request this information in a different format or another language; please speak to your doctor or nurse.

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