# Recovery After a Tooth Extraction: What to Expect | Core Dental

Canonical: https://www.coredental.com.au/recovery-following-teeth-extractions/

## Details:

Recovery after a tooth extraction varies from person to person and from tooth to tooth, because some extractions are more difficult than others. As a general guide, a simple extraction may allow you to return to normal activity within a day, while a more complex one can take up to a week. Many people find recovery takes about four to seven days, and some symptoms can take up to two weeks to settle. At Core Dental our dentists explain what to expect and how to care for the area, so please follow the advice you are given.

## How long does recovery from a tooth extraction typically take?

Recovery time depends on how complex the extraction is. In general:

Simple extractions may allow you to get back to normal within about one day.

More complex extractions can take up to a week for fuller recovery.

Recovery commonly takes about four to seven days, and some symptoms may take up to two weeks to resolve completely.

These are general estimates and not a promise for any individual. Your dentist will give you a more specific idea after examining the tooth and any X-rays.

## What symptoms are normal after a tooth extraction?

Common symptoms after an extraction include:

bleeding from the surgical site

discomfort or soreness

swelling

bruising on the cheeks

numbness from the local anaesthetic, which lasts for several hours

A small amount of bleeding is normal. If swelling, pain or bleeding seems to be getting worse rather than better, contact your dentist.

## How should you prepare before a tooth is removed?

A few simple steps beforehand can make the day easier.

Eat and drink beforehand. You will be numb around the extraction site for several hours, which can make eating and drinking difficult afterwards. We also understand that an extraction can feel daunting, and a light meal and good hydration beforehand can help you avoid feeling faint.

Ask about pain relief. Your dentist may suggest standard pain relief such as paracetamol or ibuprofen shortly before the extraction, so it is working when the local anaesthetic wears off. Alternatively, they may suggest taking it as soon as the procedure is over, so have some ready at home. Check with your

dentist or pharmacist what suits you, especially if you have other health conditions or take other medicines.

Plan some time at home. If possible, avoid booking your extraction right before a major social event, sporting event or holiday. Allowing around seven days is a sensible guide. Most people carry on with their day, but it is wise to allow for common complications such as a dry socket (see below). Exceptions may apply, for example if the extraction is done under general anaesthetic, intravenous sedation ( sleep dentistry ) or nitrous oxide, because other instructions may apply.

## What should you do after the tooth is removed?

Your dentist will give you instructions that suit your situation. Common advice includes the following.

No smoking or alcohol for 24 hours. Smoking increases the chance of delayed healing and infection. It helps to avoid smoking for as long as possible until the site has healed, and it matters most in the first days. Alcohol can increase the chance of bleeding because it can raise blood pressure.

Avoid drinking through a straw. The suction can increase the chance of bleeding in the early stages of healing.

Avoid strenuous exercise and heavy manual work for the first 24 hours. These can raise blood pressure, which can lead to bleeding.

Eat soft foods. Choose foods that need little chewing, and avoid spicy or very acidic foods for comfort. Your jaw joint can ache after being held open, so soft foods help. While you are numb, avoid very hot food and drinks, because you can burn yourself without noticing.

Rinse with warm salt water after the first 24 hours. Rinse gently twice a day, or more often if your dentist advises, and brush the area gently. This helps keep the area clean and reduces the chance of infection. Avoid rinsing and spitting in the first 24 hours, because this can disturb the blood clot that your body needs for healing.

## How do you manage bleeding after an extraction?

If bleeding occurs after you leave the surgery, you can usually stop it using the sterile gauze your dentist provides. Place the gauze over the extraction site and apply firm pressure, usually by biting down, for 15 to 20 minutes. If bleeding does not stop, contact the dental practice or, if it is after hours, the nearest emergency department. A blood clot that fails to form can, in rare cases, point to a clotting disorder, so it is worth having it checked.

If you have uncontrollable bleeding, difficulty breathing or swallowing, a serious facial injury or another life-threatening symptom, call 000 immediately.

## When does swelling peak, and how can you reduce it?

Swelling typically peaks about two to three days after surgery and begins to ease after four to five days. An ice pack held against the cheek can help reduce swelling. Your dentist can tell you how long to use it and whether anything else suits you.

## What is a dry socket?

A dry socket, known medically as acute alveolar osteitis, is a common post-operative local problem. It happens when the healing blood clot is dislodged from the extraction site, which exposes the underlying bone and nerves. Symptoms can include a bad taste and severe pain developing two to three days after the extraction that is not relieved by standard pain relief.

A dry socket is more common:

in smokers

if post-operative instructions are not followed, for example avoiding rinsing and spitting in the first 24 hours

in people with an impaired immune system, such as with diabetes

after a difficult extraction, or a surgical extraction that needed sutures

if you have had a dry socket before

Sometimes dry sockets happen for no known reason. If you think you have the symptoms, please call your dentist rather than waiting. Treatment generally involves cleaning out the socket and placing a soothing dressing, and antibiotics are not always needed. Following your dentist's advice makes it more likely that discomfort is managed appropriately.

## What should you ask your dentist about an extraction?

A useful first step is to explain your concern, symptoms and treatment goals when you book. Bring relevant medical information and a list of your current medicines. You may like to ask what the recommended approach is intended to achieve, whether there are reasonable alternatives to extraction, what aftercare involves and what risks or limitations apply. You can also ask about replacing a missing tooth, for example with an implant or bridge , so that the gap is planned for. A written treatment plan can help you compare stages, expected appointments and payment arrangements before you proceed.

## The clot is the thing you are protecting

Almost every published aftercare instruction for an extraction is protecting one thing. Knowing which makes the list easier to follow and easier to remember.

The Victorian Department of Health's aftercare, verbatim:

"Take pain-relieving medication if needed (and on advice from your oral health professional)."

"Bite on the gauze to help stop bleeding"

"Avoid excessive rinsing, sucking through a straw or spitting as that can cause the blot clot to not form, or come loose."

"Hold warm salty water in your mouth. Do this after meals and no earlier than 24 hours after surgery."

"Eat soft, easy-to-chew foods for the next few days to keep the area clean from food particles."

"Don't smoke for 48 hours after the surgery."

"Avoid alcohol and excessive physical activity."

(The source writes "blot clot" where it means the blood clot.)

Three of those items are the same instruction in different forms. Rinsing hard, drinking through a straw and spitting all disturb a forming clot. So does starting salt water too early, which is why the Department puts a 24-hour condition on it.

What normal looks like. "It is normal for your jaw and gum to be sore, swollen and bleed a little for a few days after having a wisdom tooth out."

What failure looks like. "One possible complication ... is a dry socket (alveolar osteitis), when the area where the tooth came from doesn't heal properly causing severe pain and a bad smell from the area. This happens more often in people who smoke or have difficulty in healing. Dry socket can be successfully treated by your oral health professional."

Severe pain and a bad smell, as distinct from soreness and slight bleeding. And it is treatable, so it is a reason to go back.

Why smoking gets its own 48-hour rule. The Department's smoking advice: people who smoke or vape "are more likely to get infections and do not heal as well as non-smokers/non-vapers", and its list of common oral problems includes "poor healing after tooth removal (known as dry socket)" and "poor healing after mouth and gum surgery". Quitting "reduces the risk of developing gum disease and mouth cancer, and improves the person's response to gum treatment". The Department points to Quitline for help.

If you had a general anaesthetic , there are published instructions about the rest of the day: "If you are permitted to leave hospital within hours of the surgery, don't try to drive home because your coordination may be affected by the medication", and "don't drive a car within 24 hours after the procedure".

Sources: Better Health Channel (Victorian Department of Health), Wisdom teeth, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (the page states its review date as 3 June 2022); Effects of smoking and vaping on oral health, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 24 September 2025); General anaesthetics, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (the page states its review date as 30 September 2012). All accessed 6 November 2026.

## Healing beyond the first week: the gap and what fills it

The published advice looks further ahead than most aftercare lists, and the longer timeline matters if the tooth is going to be replaced.

The gum and bone settle over months, not days. The Department, on timing for a denture: "If you have recently had teeth removed, measurements usually start about two to three months after your teeth have been taken out. This allows time for the gum and bone to heal and settle which means that the denture has a better fit from the start."

Two to three months for the gum and bone to settle. That is the published figure, and it is the reason replacement planning is not immediate.

If waiting is not acceptable, there is an alternative with a stated caveat. "Immediate dentures may be considered when you do not wish to be without teeth for two to three months. Denture measurements begin before the teeth are taken out, so that the dentures are ready to be put in at the same time your teeth are removed. Changes to the bone after the teeth are removed may cause the denture to become loose over time and it may need to be adjusted and 'relined' within a few months to improve the fit. Sometimes, there may be a need to remake the denture if there is a lot of bone and gum shrinkage."

And for an implant, bone is assessed rather than assumed. "The area of the missing tooth needs to be studied to make sure it is suitable for an implant. This includes looking at the gum and bone health, amount of space, your bite, and your general health." The fusion itself takes time: "It can take up to 6 months for the bone to fuse strongly to the screw."

Which is why the condition of the bone at extraction matters. On a tooth lost to infection, the Department warns: "Tooth replacement options are available but may be limited if the infection has already caused advanced bone loss."

Why replacing a tooth is considered at all. "Missing teeth can make it difficult to chew food. This might make it difficult to get the nutrients your body needs which can affect your health."

And the emotional side, which the Department states on a clinical page. "You may need to take some time to prepare yourself emotionally for getting dentures. Research has found that tooth loss can cause emotions such as grief, denial, anger and depression. You may feel a loss of confidence or feel self-conscious when eating, talking or smiling."

Signs of infection to report rather than wait out , from the Department's list for infection around a tooth: "facial swelling"; "pus coming from the gum"; "swollen and sore lymph nodes underneath the jaw";

"difficulty opening the mouth and swallowing"; "fever".

And one published note on what is still possible. The Department's overall position is that "these days, dental practitioners aim to help you keep your natural teeth for as long as possible", and that "with good care, teeth can last a lifetime" — so if other teeth are at risk, the period after an extraction is a reasonable time to ask what would protect them.

Sources: Better Health Channel (Victorian Department of Health), Dentures, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 4 August 2026); Cosmetic dentistry and teeth whitening, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 12 December 2025); Root canal treatment, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 14 July 2025); Wisdom teeth, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (the page states its review date as 3 June 2022). All accessed 6 November 2026.

## Frequently asked questions

### *Is it normal to bleed after an extraction?*

A small amount of bleeding from the extraction site is normal. Biting firmly on sterile gauze for 15 to 20 minutes usually helps. If bleeding does not stop, contact your dental practice or, after hours, an emergency department.

### *Why should I avoid a straw after an extraction?*

Suction from a straw can dislodge the blood clot that forms in the socket and may increase bleeding in the early stages of healing. It is generally advised to avoid straws for the period your dentist recommends.

### *How long should I avoid smoking after an extraction?*

At least the first 24 hours, and ideally for as long as possible until the site has healed. Smoking increases the chance of delayed healing and infection, and it is associated with dry socket.

### *What should I eat after a tooth extraction?*

Soft foods that need little chewing are usually more comfortable. Avoid very hot food and drink while you are numb, and avoid spicy or very acidic foods for comfort. Your dentist can advise you on how your diet should progress.

### *When should I call my dentist after an extraction?*

Contact your dentist if pain gets worse after two or three days, if you notice a bad taste, or if bleeding or swelling does not settle. For urgent care, see our emergency dentistry page or call 13 13 16.

### *Why am I told not to rinse, spit or use a straw?*

All three disturb the clot. The Victorian Department of Health groups them: "Avoid excessive rinsing, sucking through a straw or spitting as that can cause the blot clot to not form, or come loose." (The source has a typo; it means the blood clot.)

### *When can I start salt water rinses?*

"Hold warm salty water in your mouth. Do this after meals and no earlier than 24 hours after surgery."

### *How long should I avoid smoking?*

"Don't smoke for 48 hours after the surgery." People who smoke or vape "are more likely to get infections and do not heal as well as non-smokers/non-vapers", and "poor healing after tooth removal (known as dry socket)" is on the Department's list of common problems.

### *What should I eat in the first few days?*

"Eat soft, easy-to-chew foods for the next few days to keep the area clean from food particles." Also "avoid alcohol and excessive physical activity".

### *What is normal afterwards?*

"It is normal for your jaw and gum to be sore, swollen and bleed a little for a few days."

### *How would I know if something is wrong?*

Dry socket presents as "severe pain and a bad smell from the area" — different from normal soreness. It "can be successfully treated by your oral health professional". Signs of infection include "facial swelling", "pus coming from the gum", "swollen and sore lymph nodes underneath the jaw", "difficulty opening the mouth and swallowing" and "fever".

### *Can I drive myself home?*

Not after a general anaesthetic. "Don't try to drive home because your coordination may be affected by the medication", and "don't drive a car within 24 hours after the procedure".

### *How long before the gum and bone settle?*

Longer than most people expect. For denture measurements, "measurements usually start about two to three months after your teeth have been taken out. This allows time for the gum and bone to heal and settle."

### *Can I have a denture straight away?*

An immediate denture is possible, with a caveat: "Changes to the bone after the teeth are removed may cause the denture to become loose over time and it may need to be adjusted and 'relined' within a few months to improve the fit."

### *What about an implant?*

The site is assessed first — "the gum and bone health, amount of space, your bite, and your general health" — and "it can take up to 6 months for the bone to fuse strongly to the screw".

### *Does it matter how much bone is left?*

Yes. Where a tooth was lost to infection, "tooth replacement options are available but may be limited if the infection has already caused advanced bone loss".

### *Is it normal to feel upset about losing a tooth?*

Yes, and the Department says so: "Research has found that tooth loss can cause emotions such as grief, denial, anger and depression. You may feel a loss of confidence or feel self-conscious when eating, talking or smiling."

## Related services and further reading

General tooth extraction

Wisdom tooth extraction

Recovering from a wisdom tooth extraction

What is involved in a tooth extraction procedure?

Oral surgery recovery

Emergency dentistry

Sleep dentistry

Replacement options for missing teeth

## How can we help?

If you need a tooth removed, or you are unsure about your recovery, our dentists can examine you and explain your options. You can also explore our general dentistry and emergency dentistry services. Call 13 13 16 or book online at any of our nine Core Dental practices.

## Core Dental at a glance

Nine Core Dental clinics across Melbourne: Southbank, South Melbourne, Caroline Springs, Carrum Downs, Epping, Wyndham, Berwick, Bayside and Glenferrie.

Open six days a week: Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm and Saturday mornings.

We quote before treatment starts and offer interest-free payment plans.

Call 13 13 16 or book online.

## Contact Core Dental

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| Phone | 13 13 16 |
| Booking | Online through coredental.com.au, or call 13 13 16 |
| Hours | Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm, Saturday 8.00am to 1.30pm (Bayside Saturday 8.30am to 1.30pm), Sunday closed |
| Clinics | Southbank , South Melbourne , Caroline Springs , Carrum Downs , Epping , Wyndham , Berwick , Bayside , Glenferrie |

Results, recovery times and potential risks vary for each individual. This information is general in nature and is intended for people over 18. Seek advice from a qualified, AHPRA-registered practitioner before proceeding.

### *How long is recovery after a simple tooth extraction?*

A simple extraction may allow a return to normal activity within about a day, while a more complex one can take up to a week. Our Core Dental dentists give you personal guidance after examining the tooth.

### *What symptoms are normal after an extraction?*

Bleeding from the site, soreness, swelling, cheek bruising and numbness lasting several hours are common. Contact Core Dental if symptoms worsen instead of improving after the first few days.

### *How can I control bleeding after I leave the Core Dental clinic?*

Apply firm pressure with sterile gauze by biting down for 15 to 20 minutes. If bleeding continues, contact your Core Dental clinic or, after hours, your nearest emergency department.

### *When does swelling peak after an extraction?*

Swelling generally peaks around two to three days after surgery and starts to ease after four to five days. A cold pack can help, and our Core Dental team can advise how long to use it.

### *What causes a dry socket after an extraction?*

A dry socket, medically called acute alveolar osteitis, happens when the healing clot is dislodged, exposing bone and nerves. It can cause severe pain two to three days later. Core Dental dentists can clean the socket and place a dressing.

### *Should I take pain relief before an extraction?*

Your dentist may suggest standard pain relief such as paracetamol or ibuprofen before treatment or straight afterwards. Core Dental recommends checking with your dentist or pharmacist first, particularly if you take other medicines.

### *Does Core Dental offer sedation for extractions?*

Sleep dentistry and sedation options are available at select Core Dental clinics. Your dentist can explain whether sedation, nitrous oxide or general anaesthetic suits your situation and which clinic offers it.

### *How do I book an extraction appointment at Core Dental?*

Call Core Dental on 13 13 16 or book online through coredental.com.au. We have nine clinics across Melbourne and are open Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm and Saturday mornings, with Sunday closed.