

# Immediate Denture Post Op Instructions – Before and After Your Procedure

## Before Your Procedure

**Take some time off.** While some patients choose to return to work the day after their procedure, this is not the norm. We recommend taking at least 4 days off from work and required public/social activities — a full week is even better if you are able. This allows you ample recovery time from your major dental procedure, and also gives you time to start getting accustomed to eating and speaking with your new teeth.

**Arrange a driver.** Since this is a major dental procedure, many patients choose to take a relaxation/anti-anxiety medication prior to their treatment, which will be prescribed by your dentist. While you are under the influence of this medication, you **ARE NOT** legally able to operate a motor vehicle. Therefore, you must bring someone with you who can drive you home from your procedure.

### **Items to get ahead of time:**

- Pick up the medications prescribed to you by your Nashville Dentures and Implants dentist
  - Ice packs and extra gauze
  - Ibuprofen (e.g. Motrin) and Acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol) if you can take them
  - Tea bags (These can be used to help control bleeding, if needed. You will read more on this later.)
  - Liquid nourishment and soft foods – Ensure, Boost, Carnation drinks, yogurt, etc. are all good options
  - Extra pillows to help you sleep in an elevated position after surgery
  - Extra wash cloths and/or hand towels for wiping your face after surgery
  - Salt for salt water rinses
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## Day of Your Procedure

We recommend you wear clothing you do not mind possibly getting blood on. It is also important that you bring your prescribed medications with you. Please arrive **with your driver** 30 minutes prior to when your procedure is scheduled to begin in order to take your relaxation/anti-anxiety medication **on-site** (do NOT take any medication prior to arriving at the office).

**NOTE: You are not legally able to operate a motor vehicle for 24 hours after you have taken your relaxation/anti-anxiety medication. We require that you bring a driver with you.**

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## After Your Procedure

- **Bleeding/Oozing.** Minimal bleeding/oozing should be expected after your procedure. This is completely normal and typically stops within 48 hours.
- **Swelling.** The amount of swelling experienced will vary from patient to patient. Some patients will swell very little or not at all, while others will experience moderate to significant swelling. Any swelling should subside within 1-2 weeks.
- **Bruising.** The amount of bruising experienced will also vary from patient to patient. Any bruising will typically be gone within 2 weeks.
- **Increased Salivation (Extra Spit).** This is your body's natural reaction to a foreign body (your new teeth!) in the mouth. This usually subsides within 72 hours.
- **Pain/Discomfort.** Some discomfort is to be expected. Your prescribed pain medication will help to alleviate this. An alternative to narcotic pain medications is to take ibuprofen and acetaminophen. These medications can help tremendously and come with fewer side effects than narcotics.
- **Stiff Jaw and Jaw Muscles.** Apply moist heat (e.g. a warm, damp washcloth) and gently massage area to help with any stiffness you may be experiencing.
- **Sore Throat or Difficulty Swallowing.** This typically subsides within 2-3 days.
- **Itching.** Some patients will experience an itching sensation as their tissue heals following their procedure. This is completely normal and normally does not persist beyond the first week.

- **Adjusting To Your New Teeth.** Your denture(s) may feel bulky in your mouth at first, and your speech may also feel a little strange. Practice speaking with them as much as possible, especially ‘S’ words like Mississippi. Most patients adjust to speaking with their new dentures within 1-2 weeks.
- **Potential For Breakage.** While dentures are quite durable, they are still a polymer so it is possible for them to break. Teeth can pop out, cracks can form, etc. The chances of a breakage is higher while you are in your healing phase. The main reason for this is that the jawbones are largest immediately following extractions, so there is less room in your mouth for your dentures. As a result, your immediate denture(s) will generally be thinner than regular/replacement denture(s). Also, as you have your soft liners removed and replaced, a small portion of acrylic will be removed, which can weaken the denture. Don’t worry though, the last step of the healing/re-fitting process will restore full strength to your dentures. In the event you do experience a breakage during your healing phase, we will repair your denture(s) at no cost to you. Because we understand that this is extremely inconvenient for our patients, we will repair your denture(s) as quickly as possible (same day in most cases).

### **Caring For Yourself After Surgery**

- Leave your denture(s) in for the first 24 hours after your procedure. This will help control swelling and bleeding. Occasionally, after taking your dentures out, patient’s gums will swell enough that they are unable to put their dentures back in. If this happens, don’t worry — it is completely normal. The swelling should go down and you will be able to get your dentures back in in a few days.
- Be sure to come in for your quick post-op appointment the next business day after your procedure. At this appointment, we’ll check to make sure everything’s looking good in your mouth, make any necessary adjustments to your denture(s), and answer any questions you may have.
- Take it easy for the first 72 hours after surgery. Get as much rest as possible.
- Sleep in a reclined 45-degree position. This will help reduce swelling.
- Place ice packs on both sides of your face, 20 minutes on, 20 minutes off for the first 1-2 days after your surgery. There are special ice packs that wrap around your face/head and securely attach in place. A regular ice pack or a bag of frozen peas and an elastic bandage (e.g. an ACE bandage) also works well.
- After coming in for your post-operative follow-up appointment or 24 hours after your procedure, whichever comes first, you can begin warm saltwater rinses. Mix 1 teaspoon of salt with 1 cup (8 oz) of warm water and mix thoroughly. In front of a sink, remove your dentures and set them down somewhere safe where they will not be easily knocked on the floor or damaged. Now let the warm saltwater gently roll around in your mouth. **DO NOT** swish vigorously. Let the saltwater fall out of your mouth into the sink. **DO NOT** spit forcefully. Repeat this until the saltwater is gone. Place your dentures back in your mouth right away. Repeat this process 3 times per day for the next 2 weeks, then as needed after that.
- Take your prescribed medications as directed.
 

**NOTE:** A very effective alternative to narcotic pain medication is with a combination of acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol) and ibuprofen (e.g. Motrin). Alternating these two medicines is shown to be as good or better at controlling post-operative pain than narcotics, and has far fewer side effects.

  - Start by taking a 650 mg dose of acetaminophen (2 pills, 325 mg each)
  - 3 hours after the dose of acetaminophen, take a 600 mg dose of ibuprofen (3 pills, 200 mg each)
  - 3 hours after the dose of ibuprofen, take another 650 mg dose of acetaminophen (2 pills, 325 mg each)
  - 3 hours after the dose of acetaminophen, take another 600 mg dose of ibuprofen (3 pills, 200 mg each)

Repeat this for at least 3 days after surgery. **IMPORTANT: Do not take more than 3000 mg of acetaminophen or 3200 mg of ibuprofen in any 24-hour period.**
- You may feel strange due to the anti-anxiety medication you took before your procedure. This feeling typically subsides within 24 hours, but can persist for up to 1 week in some patients.
- Do not pull on your lips or cheeks to look at your mouth or teeth. We know that it’s exciting and interesting to inspect everything, but putting strain on your sutures (stitches) and surgical sites can cause unwanted side effects.
- Make sure you eat! We recommend starting with a liquid diet, then adding in more solid foods as your extraction sites heal and you become more proficient with your dentures. *Below is a list of recommended foods.*
- Eating with dentures is much different than eating with natural teeth and can be frustrating at first. With practice and by utilizing the tips below, you will become proficient with your new teeth much more quickly.

- Stay hydrated and drink plenty of water. Your body needs it as you heal.
- **DO NOT** drink using a straw for the first 2 weeks.
- **DO NOT** smoke. We highly recommend quitting smoking before starting this procedure. Smoking increases the likelihood of dry socket(s) and other complications.
- **DO NOT** drink alcoholic or carbonated beverages for the first week.
- Tea bags can help control bleeding, **but should only be used as a last resort**. Light bleeding is normal for up to 3 days after your procedure. Also, blood mixed with saliva can look like a lot more than it really is. If you feel that you are bleeding more than you should be, an old home remedy that works really well is using damp tea bags on the extraction sites. Get a tea bag (however many you need to cover the bleeding extraction sites), get them wet, and ring out the excess water. Take your dentures out of your mouth, place the tea bag(s) on the bleeding extraction sites, and close your mouth, applying gentle pressure to the tea bags. The tannic acid in the tea leaves will help you clot. The tea bags can be changed out as many times as needed if they become saturated. **NOTE:** If you do use the tea bags and leave your dentures out for more than a few minutes, there is a good chance that your gums will swell enough that you will not be able to get your dentures back in. If this happens, don't worry – it is completely normal. The swelling should go down after a few days and you'll be able to get your teeth back in.

### Caring For Your Dentures

- Take your dentures out for several hours every day. This gives your tissue a chance to breathe and gets saliva flow to it. Both are important for oral health.
- Cleansing tablets are great for keeping your dentures clean. Do **NOT** soak your dentures in cleansing tablets while there are soft liners in them. The chemicals can soak into your soft liner and irritate your gums.
- Clean your dentures at least once a day with either a denture brush or a soft bristled toothbrush and anti-bacterial soap.

### Eating With Your New Dentures

When it comes to eating with your new dentures, it is going to be difficult at first and will take some practice. It is helpful to cut your food into small pieces. It is also important to chew with food on both sides of the denture (a small piece of food on both the left and right sides). This distributes the bite forces more evenly and helps keep the denture from rocking/pivoting loose. Some recommended foods are listed below:

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| • Dietary supplement drinks (Ensure, Boost, Nestle Resource, Carnation, etc.) | • Soft/overcooked pasta (e.g. macaroni & cheese) |
| • Yogurt  | • Cottage cheese                                 |
| • Pudding   | • Pancakes                                       |
| • Applesauce  | • Ice cream/frozen yogurt                        |
| • Finely blended smoothies  | • Fish   |
| • Milk and protein powder shakes  | • Tender chicken                                 |
| • Soups/broth, strain out solid pieces (clam chowder, bisque soups, etc.)     | • Avocados                                       |
| • Milk  | • Bananas  |
| • Gelatin (Jell-O)  | • Sloppy joes                                    |
| • Pureed vegetables can be added to smoothies                                 | • Chili  |
| • Scrambled eggs  | • Hummus   |
| • Oatmeal   | • Soft breads                                    |
| • Mashed potatoes   | • Potato salad                                   |
|   | • Refried beans                                  |
|   | • Soft vegetables                                |

### Healing Phase

- **Soft liners.** These are made of a soft material that is placed in your denture(s). It takes up the extra space that develops between your dentures and your gums as you heal from your procedure. They help improve the fit and

comfort of your denture(s). After your extraction sites have sufficiently healed (usually 2-4 weeks), you can use adhesive with your dentures if you would like. Powdered adhesives are the best option. DO NOT use the gel adhesives as these can pull the soft liner out of your denture.

- **Adjustments.** Sore spots are common with dentures and require that you come in for adjustments. Please do not attempt to adjust your dentures at home as this can negatively affect their fit and possibly even ruin them. **NOTE:** We **CANNOT** warranty dentures that have been adjusted outside of our office.
- **Sharp Edges In The Jawbones After Extractions.** If you notice what feel like sharp edges around your extraction sites, these are most likely where the jawbones supported the teeth. Over the first few months following your immediate surgery, these will smooth off as your extraction sites and jawbones heal.
- **Bone Spurs.** Following your extractions, you could have small slivers of bone begin to work their way out of your gums. This is completely normal. Most bone spurs will work their way out naturally over time; you can sometimes help speed this process up by massaging the gums near the bone spur. Occasionally, bone spurs will need to be removed by your dentist. Again, these are a completely normal part of the process.
- **Reline.** This is a refit of your dentures to your gums with hard acrylic after healing. This provides a long-term fit for your dentures. Since your jawbones slowly continue to change throughout the remainder of your life, periodic relines will be needed.

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### Speaking With Your New Dentures

Just like eating, it will take time to become proficient at speaking with your dentures. You should practice as much as possible, especially saying “s” words like “Mississippi” or “sixty six.” If you find your dentures moving around while speaking, securing them with denture adhesive (Fixodent, Poligrip, Secure, etc.) or implants can help stabilize them.

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### Other Important Items

**Physical Activity.** Avoid high exertion physical activity for 1-2 weeks as this can cause your extraction sites to start bleeding again. However, you can get out and participate in light to moderate activities as soon as you feel up to it.

**Sutures/Stitches.** We use different types of sutures depending on the situation. Some dissolve on their own, while others must be removed. We know they can be irritating, but it’s important to let them do their job while you heal.

**Adhesives.** These can help hold your dentures in place. While they don’t offer the stability of dental implants, they can offer some additional function and security. They come in powder, gel, and strip forms.

**Refits And New Dentures Over Time.** While the majority of change in your jawbones happens in the first 6-12 months after your teeth are extracted, your mouth will continue to change slowly and you will continue to lose bone for the rest of your life. Also, denture teeth will wear down over time and eventually require replacement. For these reasons, you will need to have your dentures re-fitted (relines) or replaced periodically.

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### Implants

If you struggle to eat and speak well with your dentures, securing them with dental implants can provide significant improvement. Implants also help to slow or stop the loss of jawbone in the areas they are placed so you have a better foundation for your dentures. As few as 2 implants can make a world of difference. Ask your dentist if you are a candidate for dental implants.

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### Things To Remember

You’re going through a major transition with your immediate denture(s). While you should expect there to be some discomfort and frustration during the healing phase, it will all be worth it when you’re eating, speaking, and smiling with your new teeth. We want to thank you for trusting us with your smile and with your health. If you have any concerns, please don’t hesitate to contact us.