

Irrigation Instructions after Wisdom Tooth Surgery

Why do I have to irrigate?

- Due to the nature of wisdom tooth sockets, they tend to accumulate food debris during meals.
- Mouth rinsing alone may not effectively clear the accumulated food debris.
- Failure to remove this debris could lead to the development of a dry socket and/or infection.
- Persistent unremoved food debris may result in an unpleasant taste and odor emanating from your mouth.

When do I irrigate?

- Starting 1 week after surgery (e.g., if you have surgery on Friday, you would begin irrigating the following Friday).

WHAT does irrigating feel like?

- It may be uncomfortable to open wide enough to get the syringe back to the hole to irrigate.
- The first few times you irrigate, the sites may be tender for 15-30 minutes afterward. This is normal. This sensation will dissipate with repeated flushing.
- There may be a slight oozing of blood the first few times you do this. This is normal and should go away.
- If you skip irrigating for several days, it will be significantly more painful when you resume irrigating.

How do I irrigate?

FREQUENCY:

- At least once a day. Preferably, after each meal to remove debris.
- Keep going until the sockets close.
- You'll know when to stop when the site no longer collects any significant food debris. This is typically after 1-2 months.

THINGS YOU'LL NEED:

- Irrigating syringe (provided by our office)
- Teaspoon
- Salt water or mouth rinse (either is fine)
- A mirror and sink
- A tissue, towel, or something to clean up with.



Step by Step Instructions

- Assemble the syringe
- Draw up irrigating liquid into syringe until it is almost full
- Open your mouth as wide as possible
- Place teaspoon in the area of the last lower molar until the spoon is against the cheek.
- Gently pull the cheek out laterally (toward your cheek) with the spoon until the cheek is taught. This should reveal the hole in the gum tissue that leads down to your socket.



- Place the tip of the syringe 1-2mm into the hole
- Gently push the syringe plunger in slow, pumping motions until the irrigating liquid is out.



- Repeat until the irrigating liquid coming from the socket runs clear
- Repeat on the other side.
- You will only irrigate the lower wisdom teeth sockets. You do not need to irrigate the upper sockets, gravity will take care of those.

Syringe Cleaning:

- The syringe just needs to be pulled apart, rinsed, and set out to air dry after each use. The syringe is NOT dishwasher safe.

FAQ's:

Should I use salt water or the mouth rinse?

Either is completely fine. The main goal with irrigating is to get food debris out with a flushing action.

Can I just use my WaterPik?

NO! The force generated by your WaterPik can damage the fragile healing clot predisposing you to a dry socket. It can also dissect the healing tissues away from one another causing hematoma or seroma formation. In short, don't use your WaterPik to irrigate your bottom sockets.

I can't see where I'm supposed to put the syringe tip?

This is a common problem. The hole that you need to find is usually small and located directly behind the last tooth in the back. To help, try placing the tea spoon far back until it almost hits the jaw, then gently pull laterally (out toward your ear). This may help “open” the hole for you to see. If you’re still having difficulty, please call our office so that you can come in for us to demonstrate this for you!

It’s too dark back there. I can’t see this in the mirror. Any suggestions?

Don’t give up...ask for help! Ask a family member. A flashlight or hiking headlight makes visualization much easier.

There is a “gash” in my cheek. Is this normal?

Yes. This is the healing releasing incision. It is normal.

Do I have to irrigate the top sockets?

Usually, the top sockets don’t collect much food debris. Any debris that may get impacted in the top sockets typically drains naturally by gravity. However, you can certainly clean these holes out if you wish.

This sounds like a hassle. Do I really have to do it?

YES. Failure to irrigate (for whatever reason) usually results in dry socket, delayed healing, infection, or all of the above. On very rare occasions, the gum tissue at the extraction sites heals quickly and closes the hole so there is nowhere for food debris to accumulate and therefore no hole for irrigation. If you’ve followed the above and nothing seems to be working, this may be the case.

Can I get help?

YES! Please call us anytime if you have questions or if you would like for us to help you find the holes or demonstrate the correct irrigating technique. We’re always here to help! (972) 366-0065

