

Caring For Myself After Placement Of Immediate Denture

What are my instructions for the first 24 hours?

Do not remove your immediate denture during the first 24 hours. Your denture will act like a bandage during the initial healing of the surgical area. If the denture is removed during this period, the gums may swell and make it hard to get the denture back in place.

Clean the rest of your mouth and any remaining natural teeth as usual. Keeping a clean mouth is important for the healing process. Do not spit forcefully during this time or the denture could become dislodged. If you need to remove liquid from your mouth, let the liquid drool out gently over a sink. Avoid mouthwashes during the first 24 hours unless prescribed by your dentist.

Continue to take any prescription medications for other medical conditions as directed. If you forgot to tell your dentist about any medications you are taking, including over-the-counter supplements, tell them at once.

How will I care for my pain?

Your dentist may advise you to take over-the-counter pain medications with or without an additional prescription pain medication. Take your pain medication as directed. It is helpful to take the first dose as soon as possible so it is in your system before the anesthetic (“numbness”) wears off. Research has shown that around-the-clock dosing of pain medications is very effective to control pain. This means that you will take a dose of pain-



relieving medication **on a set schedule** rather than taking them as needed when you feel pain.

Most patients who follow these directions have only mild pain after the first 36 hours, may not need to use prescription pain medication and/or are able to stop taking prescription pain medication. At this point, over-the-counter pain medications alone will be strong enough to relieve any discomfort.

Your pain medication is: _____

It can also be helpful to apply an ice pack over the area during the first few hours: on for 20 minutes, off for 20 minutes. After 24 hours, switch from an cold icepack to a warm compress such as a warm towel. Do not apply ice or too hot of a compress directly to your face as this may cause burns.

How will I care for bleeding?

It is normal for some mild bleeding, “oozing,” to occur during the first 2-3 days. When bleeding occurs, close your teeth together tightly for 10 minutes and the pressure from the denture will slow down the bleeding. Do not rapidly clench and release as this only “pumps” the site and can increase the bleeding. Do not take any additional medications or herbal products during this time unless prescribed by your dentist or physician. Many seemingly harmless products can cause increased bleeding.

If you have excessive bleeding, contact your dentist immediately.

How will I remove the denture for the first time?

After the dentures have been in place for 24 hours, follow these instructions to help remove your dentures:

- Mix ½ (a half) teaspoon of salt with a cup of warm water. Place some of the mixture in your mouth.

- With your lips tightly closed, begin to force the water under the denture to loosen it.
- Gently spit the water out.

The lower denture is usually easy to remove by lifting straight up.

The upper may be harder to remove, especially the first time. Often, the upper denture comes out best in a downward and forward direction. If the denture is stubborn do the following:

- After washing your hands thoroughly with soap and water, take your index finger and place it between your denture and cheek moving up and back until you feel the back upper corner of the denture.
- Move your finger onto the top of the denture border in this area and pull down gently, increasing the force until the denture is dislodged.

The exact way your denture most easily comes out is dependent on your mouth's unique shape. After a couple of times, you will know just what to do.

There may be very dark blood inside your denture. This is normal. You may also develop some dark spots inside your mouth or on your face over the area of the surgery. This condition, called ecchymosis, goes away in a couple of days.

Brush your denture inside and out with dishwashing liquid and rinse well with warm water.

Put some of the warm salt water you made in your mouth. Use your tongue to gently scrub the gums that were covered by the denture. Do not spit. Let the salt-water drool out of your mouth into the sink. Put the clean denture back in place and press it on to your gums for 10 seconds. Close together, swallow, and hold together an additional 10 seconds to correctly seat the denture.

What should I eat during the first week?

It is very important to maintain good nutrition during the healing process. It is especially important to drink plenty of fluids. During the first 24-36 hours, you need to eat food that does not require chewing. Some suggestions are:

- Thin oatmeal, Cream of Wheat, small pasta
- Mashed potatoes or well-cooked/pureed vegetables
- Pureed soups, soups without meat or substances that require chewing
- Blended fruit and/or vegetable smoothies, canned fruits
- Scrambled eggs, soft-boiled eggs
- Pureed meats
- Milk, yogurt, or nutritional supplements such as Ensure, Boost, or your preferred protein shake

After the first or second day, you may slowly increase the consistency of the food.

Cut your food into small pieces and eat slowly. Eating with a denture is very different from eating with natural teeth. You may find it helpful to put food on both sides of your back teeth and chew straight up and down. Biting food off is generally better done at the corners of the mouth instead of the very front as is common with natural teeth. It may be hard to predict exactly what biting and chewing movements will work most effectively for you since this varies widely from person-to-person. Be patient with yourself, and you will soon learn what works best for you!

How will I train my speech?

Certain sounds may be hard to pronounce when you first get your denture. Some people find it helpful to read out loud to themselves for the first few days to train their speech. Over time your speech will improve.

How will I become accustomed to my denture?

Having a denture in your mouth can be overwhelming at first. This initial reaction is to be expected. Our mouths are designed to detect even very small foreign objects. Therefore, something as large a denture can be quite a “shock.” You will probably notice additional saliva in your mouth. This is because objects in the mouth are usually food so saliva is increased to aid the eating process. It may take a couple of weeks for your mouth to realize the denture is now “part of you.” In most cases, a lower denture will cause more problems than an upper denture. Even with a “perfect fit,” the shape of the lower gums usually prevents suction, so a lower denture feels looser than an upper denture. A denture adhesive may be of help in this case. There are many types of adhesives available, and your dentist can offer advice on which one best fits your needs. If you continue to have problems with the lower denture, ask your dentist if implants might be right for you. Patients have fewer problems with the upper denture. In some cases, a feeling of fullness in the roof of the mouth may cause some gagging at first. This declines as the mouth realizes the denture is not a foreign object but is now “part of you.”

Sore spots

Sore spots can occur even in a denture with a “perfect fit.” This is because the tissue the denture rests upon varies from place to place. Some areas are very thick and tough, others are thin and easily injured. Contact your dentist **as soon as a sore develops** so an adjustment may be made. Trying to “tough it out” can lead to a larger sore that is harder to treat. You can buy ointments to numb the area until you can get to the dentist, but these can mask the problem area and lead to larger sores if used too long. **Never attempt to adjust the denture yourself.**

Dry mouth (xerostomia)

If you have a dry mouth, you can expect more problems wearing dentures. Saliva helps hold dentures in place and helps to reduce sore spots by providing lubrication under the denture. Your dentist can suggest products made for this condition that can make denture wearing more comfortable.

How should I care for my denture and mouth?

Starting from the day you remove your denture for the first time, remove your denture and rinse the denture out after every meal or snack.

For the first 5 days, keep your denture in at all times except to clean. Avoid mouthwashes the first 5 days unless prescribed by your dentist; some mouthwashes may slow the healing process. You may use salt water rinses as described above during this time.

When cleaning your dentures, partially fill the sink with water to cushion the impact if the denture is dropped. Use a liquid dishwashing detergent with a **denture brush** to clean the inside and outside of the denture. After healing has occurred, it is helpful to use a **soft** toothbrush with regular toothpaste to clean the gums where the denture rests, however, do not use regular toothpaste made for natural teeth on your dentures because toothpaste is too abrasive and may damage your dentures. Make sure to brush your tongue, as well. Your tongue harbors many of the germs that cause bad breath.

After the first 5 days, it is best to **leave the denture out at night** and let it soak in a denture cleanser. This allows the gums to relax and maintain optimal health. Under certain circumstances, it may be necessary to keep your denture in all night. If this is the case for you, you are at an increased risk for some problems such as oral yeast infections. Discuss this with your dentist for additional ways to keep your oral tissues healthy based on your individual situation.

Why is it important to keep up with regular dental care?

You may think that since you no longer have your natural teeth, you only need to see your dentist if you notice a problem. That is a **dangerous myth**. The supporting tissues under your dentures continue to change throughout the rest of your life. The amount of change varies from person to person. As the gums shrink, the denture and the gums become mismatched. This change is especially great during the first 6 months to a year following the removal of natural teeth. If this change is expected to be very large, your dentist may call this immediate denture a temporary denture because it is only meant to function until healing has occurred after which a new denture will be made to match the new shape of your gums. If the change is smaller, only a reline may be needed. A reline is a procedure in which additional denture material is added to the part of the denture that contacts the gums so that the denture once again closely conforms to the shape of the mouth. In some cases, your dentist may place a tissue conditioner (temporary soft liner) in your denture during the healing stage. The liner can be changed from time to time as the gums shrink to help keep you comfortable during the healing stage.

Your gums continue to change throughout life. These changes happen little by little and are usually not noticed by the denture wearer until significant damage may have been done to the tissues, sometimes requiring surgery. Your dentist is trained to detect these changes and correct them early when the treatment is less expensive and less troublesome for you. Your dentist will also closely observe your tissues for signs of oral cancer. Nearly half of the oral cancers diagnosed in North America occur in people that have dentures.

Any additional advice?

Although well-meaning, friends and relatives may give you advice that can be damaging to your new dentures and your mouth. Each individual is very different, and what might work for some may create problems for others.

Never adjust your denture yourself! A minor alteration might be very expensive to correct. Your dental staff is trained to give you the best advice based on your unique needs. Ask questions – they want to help!

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