

Dry Socket

Dry socket is an inflammation that occurs when the blood clot that forms in the socket after a tooth extraction becomes dislodged or does not form properly.

The clot is necessary to protect the socket, stop bleeding, promote the development of new bone and gum tissues, and prevent pain.

However, when the clot is lost prematurely, the inflamed socket and underlying nerves and bone are exposed.

Symptoms

The symptoms of dry socket are a severe throbbing pain that does not respond to normal pain medications. It starts one to four days following an extraction, and the pain may radiate into your ear. You may also notice a foul odor or taste in your mouth.

Causes and prevention of dry socket

After your tooth has been extracted, we'll give you complete instructions about caring for your mouth. Following them exactly will help you avoid dry socket. It's especially important to avoid certain behaviors that can cause the premature loss of a blood clot, particularly within the first 24 hours after an extraction.



Rinsing with a medicated solution

Soothing anesthetic



Dry socket

- ❖ Do not touch the extraction site with your fingers or tongue.
- ❖ Do not rinse the area during the first 24 hours after extraction. After that time, follow our instructions for when and how to rinse.
- ❖ Do not smoke or use tobacco.
- ❖ Do not suck through a straw.
- ❖ Avoid sneezing or coughing when possible.
- ❖ Avoid carbonated, hot, or alcoholic drinks.

Diagnosis and treatment

Call our office right away if you notice any symptoms of dry socket. To confirm the diagnosis, we'll talk with you about your symptoms and perform a thorough examination. The exam may include an x-ray of the extraction site.

Treatment for dry socket often includes a gentle rinsing of the socket with a medicated solution. We may also pack the site with a gauze dressing that contains a soothing anesthetic. You'll probably need to return to our office several times over the next week or two, so we can change the dressing and monitor the effectiveness of your pain medications.

Prompt diagnosis and treatment will allow the blood clot to fill back in, and the area will begin to heal normally once again.