Today, don't rinse too often.

The blood clot in the socket is the "lid" over the wound. Rinsing again and again can wash it away and start the bleeding again.[1][2]

How much bleeding is normal?

A little blood in your saliva

Normal

Common on the day of the extraction. You can wait and see.

Blood oozes and collects in your mouth

Normal: press with gauze

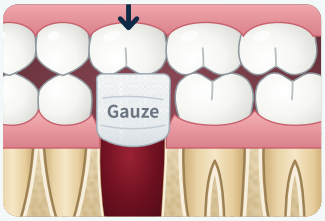
Gently spit it out, then bite on gauze as shown below.

Your mouth fills with red blood

Call the clinic now

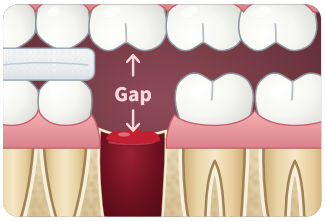
Also if two rounds of 20 minutes on gauze don't stop it.[1]

How to bite on gauze



Place it right over the socket and bite firmly

Your upper teeth press the gauze onto the socket.



Biting on the teeth next to it

The socket isn't pressed, so the bleeding won't stop.

1. **Gently** spit out any blood in your mouth
2. Place a rolled-up piece of gauze **over the socket**[1]
3. Bite firmly for **20 minutes**. **Don't keep checking**[1]
4. If it hasn't stopped, **repeat once**[1]
5. If it still hasn't stopped, **call the clinic**[1]

> **If you take blood thinners:** if pressure doesn't stop the bleeding, or it starts again, call the clinic right away instead of repeating.[1]

2–3 hours
until the numbness wears off

Numbness of the lips and tongue usually lasts about 2–3 hours (it varies with the person and the amount of anaesthetic).[5] While you are numb, you can bite your lip or tongue, or burn yourself, without noticing. **Wait to eat until the numbness has worn off.**

Avoid today

Rinsing often
Start gentle rinsing tomorrow[1][2]

Touching the socket
No tongue, fingers or toothpicks[1]

Skipping painkillers
Take them as directed[3]

Alcohol and smoking
Avoid for the first few days[3]

Hot drinks
Can restart bleeding, cause burns[3]

Hard food, nuts, seeds
Nuts and seeds get into the socket[3]

From your clinic A clinic stamp is fine for contact details

Phone _____ **Next visit** ☐ Wound check ☐ Stitch removal ☐ Other Date: Time:

Nights / holidays _____ **Medicine** ☐ Painkiller ☐ Antibiotic ☐ Mouthwash ☐ Other ( )

References [1] SDCEP. Management of Acute Dental Problems, 2nd ed. 2026. Post-extraction haemorrhage. [2] Ibid. Alveolar osteitis (dry socket). [3] NHS. Wisdom tooth removal: Recovery. Updated June 2024. [5] Hersh EV, et al. J Am Dent Assoc. 2008;139(8):1080-1093.

Written by a practising dentist (Zubora Ha Lab, Japan) · November 2026 edition

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Pain peaks on days 1–2. If it gets worse later, call the clinic.

Day-to-day tips

The key is to protect the blood clot

Rinsing	Avoid on the day of the extraction. From the next day, rinse gently.[2]
Brushing	Brush your other teeth as usual. Don't scrub the extraction site.[3]
Hot drinks	Avoid. They can restart bleeding.[3]
Eating	Choose soft food. Avoid hard or crunchy food, nuts and seeds.[3]
Alcohol / smoking	Avoid for the first few days. Smoking makes a dry socket more likely.[3][4]
Exercise	If you have had bleeding, avoid it for 24 hours after it stops.[1]

Normal pain vs. dry socket

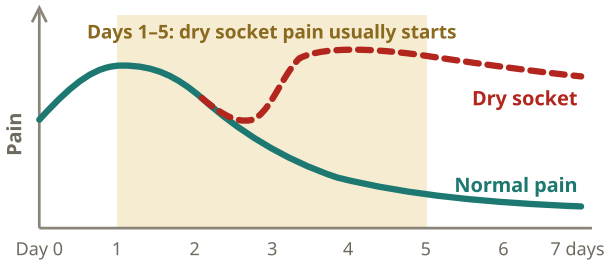

Illustration only. Pain varies from person to person.

Normal pain and swelling **start to improve after 1–2 days**.[3] Until then, don't hold back on your painkillers.

If the pain **gets better and then becomes severe**, it may be a dry socket. An empty-looking socket or a bad taste or smell are also signs.[2][4] Don't try to treat it yourself; call the clinic.

When to call

Right away (even at night)

- Swelling that makes it **hard to breathe or swallow** → call the clinic. If you can't reach them, call an **ambulance (119)**.[6]
- **Bleeding that won't stop** after two rounds of 20 minutes on gauze[1]

Call soon

- Pain not controlled by painkillers, or pain and swelling that **keep getting worse**[3]
- Severe pain **after it had been improving**; an empty-looking socket, bad taste or smell[2][4]
- Fever or feeling unwell[3]

OK to wait and see

- A little blood in your saliva
- Pain and swelling on days 1–2 that slowly settle[3]
- A bruise on the cheek, a stiff jaw[3]

If you're not sure, or you're worried, don't hesitate to call.

3–4 months
a rough guide until bone fills the socket

Even after the gum has closed, healing continues underneath. Within a few weeks the socket fills with soft tissue, and then bone forms. How long this takes varies a lot from person to person.[7] If food gets into the socket, don't pick at it with a toothpick; ask your dentist.

Clinic contact (stamp is fine)

Notes

References

[1] SDCEP. Management of Acute Dental Problems, 2nd ed. 2026. Post-extraction haemorrhage. [2] Ibid. Alveolar osteitis (dry socket). [3] NHS. Wisdom tooth removal: Recovery. Updated June 2024. [4] Kuśnierek W, et al. Dent J. 2022;10(7):121. [6] SDCEP. Ibid. Timescales for treatment. [7] Trombelli L, et al. J Clin Periodontol. 2008;35(7):630-639. "3–4 months" is the guide the author gives patients in practice.

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