



What is a Dry Socket?

- A dry socket continues to be the most common problem patients experience after dental extractions. Dry sockets occur because the blood clot that covers the bone in the extraction site (or the socket), did not form correctly or it becomes loose and is lost too early. The missing or loose blood clot allows the bone to become exposed or "dry" in the extraction site or "socket". This is why it's called a "dry socket". One out of five patients experience a dry socket. It typically occurs in greatest frequency with patients who smoke or who are taking birth control pills.
- Although both jaws can get a dry socket, they typically occur in the lower jaw. Patients who experience a dry socket will begin to feel a deep, dull continuous ache on the affected side(s). Patients may notice the pain starts in or around the ear and runs down toward the chin. It frequently begins in the middle of the night on the third to fifth day. Unfortunately, pain medication usually doesn't help.
- Dry sockets are extremely painful but they can be treated, so don't try to tough it out. Call the office immediately if you think you are experiencing a dry socket. Treatment involves placing a medicated dressing in the "empty" tooth socket(s). This will help decrease the pain and protect the socket from food particles. The effectiveness in alleviating the pain lasts for 24 to 48 hours; dressing changes will be required every day or two for seven to ten days. Dressings usually are removed when you have been pain free for two to three days. At your one-week follow-up, an irrigation device may be given to you to help keep food particles from lodging in the extraction site.
- Follow these instructions carefully. This is the only way to avoid complications, which lead to unnecessary discomfort and delayed recovery. Should any reaction or complication arise, notify the office immediately. If you need to contact Dr. Horsley-Teny after office hours, please call the office at the number on the top of this page, and follow the voicemail's instructions. I will make every attempt to answer your emergency call promptly. Occasionally, your messages may not reach me. If you do not hear from me within 30 minutes, please call me back. Do this until your call has been answered. If at any time, you feel this is a life-threatening emergency, call 911 or go to the local emergency room.