

Patient Self-Care Following Periodontal Surgery

ACTIVITY: After leaving the dental office, we suggest you relax and limit your activity as much as possible for the remainder of the day. Avoid strenuous activity and all aerobic exercise for the next 2 weeks for gum grafts and 5 days for all other procedures.

DISCOMFORT: Some discomfort may be present when the anesthesia wears off. Take all medications the doctor has prescribed for you according to the directions. Should intense discomfort occur at any time after the surgery, please telephone the doctor. If you have been given a narcotic medication, please be aware that it may cause drowsiness and/or nausea. You should not operate heavy machinery or drive while taking narcotic medications. To minimize stomach upset, take your medication with a glass of water. If you took a Triazolam, Halcion or any other variation, DO NOT take Percocet, Vicodin or any other narcotic medication for 24 hours as this could cause a life-threatening situation. Women taking birth control medications should be cautioned that taking antibiotics may reduce the effectiveness of birth control medications. Alternate methods of birth control should be employed while taking antibiotic medications.

NUMBNESS: Numbness may last 2-4 hours. Please do not eat or drink any hot or cold liquids until numbness is gone. Also, be very careful when chewing because you can accidentally bite or chew your lips, cheeks, or tongue and not know it.

ANTIBIOTICS: If you have been given an antibiotic, take as directed until gone. This will assist in preventing any infection from setting in during the healing process. Make sure you have some food in your stomach prior to taking your antibiotic. You can always ask your pharmacist for advice. If for any reason you experience any adverse effects stop taking immediately and call our office. For women taking birth control please be advised that antibiotic may interfere with the effectiveness. Alternate methods of birth control should be employed while taking antibiotic medications. If you notice that after a few days, pain or swelling are increasing or that you are experiencing an elevated temperature, please call the doctor.

SWELLING: It is normal for some swelling to occur after surgery, particularly in the lower jaw. To minimize swelling after surgery, apply an ice bag wrapped in a light tea towel to the outside of your face over the operated area. This should be left on your face for about 10 minutes, then removed for 10 minutes, or alternated from side to side, between operated areas. The use of both ice and the NSAID analgesic will reduce the amount and duration of facial swelling. If swelling is severe and starting to affect your airway, please call 911 or go to your local emergency room.

BLEEDING: It is common to have slight bleeding for a few hours after surgery. DO NOT spit or rinse your mouth after surgery as this will encourage bleeding. DO NOT use straws or smoke for the first 2 weeks after surgery. If bleeding persists, try to localize the area where the bleeding is coming from. Apply firm but gentle pressure directly to the site of bleeding with gauze. You may also use a tea bag, soak in cold water and hold on the area for 20-30 minutes. The tannic acid in the tea should help stop the bleeding. If severe bleeding continues and you cannot stop it, please call the office or go to your local emergency room. Remember, most of the blood you may see in your mouth is actually a little bit of blood mixed with saliva - blood is a very strong “dye” and a little bit of blood will color your saliva dramatically.

ORAL HYGIENE: Brushing and oral hygiene procedures should be done as usual in all untreated areas starting the night of surgery. DO NOT brush or floss the surgical site for 2 weeks. No mouthwash, salt water or peroxide rinses should be used during the two weeks following surgery. Also, avoid the use of water irrigation devices such as Water-piks or electric toothbrushes in the operated areas for 2 weeks following surgery. The exposed operated areas may be gently swabbed with a Q-tip (cotton tipped applicator) as a last oral hygiene procedure at bedtime and again in the morning, after eating and drinking. DO NOT pull on your cheeks or lips to look at the surgical site.

EATING AND DRINKING: Do not try to eat until all anesthesia (numbness) has worn off. High protein foods and liquids are desirable for 3-5 days following surgery. Avoid the use of a straw for the first 2 weeks. Semisolid foods may be eaten as long as this may be done comfortably. Eggs, custard, yogurt, pasta, steamed vegetables, casseroles, cooked cereals are some things that you might consider eating during the first few days following your surgery. Avoid spicy, salty, acidic, foods with small seeds, carbonation, and very hot or very cold foods or liquids. Also, avoid hard foods: toast crust, nuts, chips or crunchy or fibrous foods such as raw carrots that may become caught between your teeth or traumatize exposed operated tissues. Please refrain from drinking alcoholic beverages while on prescription medications. The following nutritional supplements have been found to aid in surgical healing.

Taking the following dosages for at least 4-6 weeks following your surgery may enhance healing:

Multi-vitamin with minerals; Take once a day
Calcium Take 500mg twice daily
Vitamin E Take 400 i.u.'s once daily
Vitamin C Take 1000mg once daily

These nutritional supplements are all over the counter (OTC) items and may be purchased at a drug store, health food store or the health food section of many grocery stores.

SMOKING: Smoking can drastically affect the healing process and compromise the result of your treatment; it is advised to not smoke following surgery. If you have ever thought of quitting this may be the perfect opportunity.

USE OF REMOVALBLE DENTAL APPLIANCES: If you normally wear a removable appliance which replaces missing teeth, and it rests on the operated area, it is best to minimize use of this appliance as any pressure on the surgical site could be detrimental to healing and cause discomfort.

USE OF PALATAL STENT: The plastic palatal stent is used to cover the wound on the palate. The purpose is to control bleeding and to protect the open wound during the initial stages of healing. It should not be removed during the first 72 hours. After this time, the stent may be reinserted especially during eating to minimize discomfort. If prolonged bleeding occurs under the stent, thumb pressure against the palate for 10 to 30 minutes will usually stop the bleeding. Blood mixed in with your saliva and some oozing is normal for the first two days after surgery. The collagen piece under the stent can be removed with removal of the stent and disposed.

We want your treatment to provide as positive a healing experience as possible. If you have any problems or have any questions not covered in these guidelines, please feel free to call us at any time. The doctor can be reached at [719-548-1711] if after hours follow the prompts.