

NORTHWEST DENTAL CENTRE

GUM GRAFT POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

ANTIBIOTIC: If an antibiotic has been prescribed, start taking it the first day (unless directed otherwise) and use to completion. You can reduce stomach upset by taking with food and/or plenty of liquid.

PAIN PILLS OR OINTMENT: Take one pain pill as soon as you can after surgery. It will usually work better if taken before the numbness wears off. After that, take only as needed. Take any narcotic pain pills with food and/or plenty of liquid. Do not drive after taking any narcotic pain pill and do not take them with sleeping pills or alcohol. Orabase with benzocaine can be dabbed on the palate as a numbing ointment.

ICE BAG: Use a cold pack (a plastic bag of frozen peas works well) to the face over the area where the procedure was done for 10 minutes at a time, twice an hour, for the first 6 hours. You can periodically use an ice bag the rest of the day of surgery and the next day. If you use the ice bag as directed, you should have less swelling than you would have otherwise. The less swelling, the less pain. Do not use hot packs or a hot water bottle.

SLEEP SOMEWHAT INCLINED: For the first 2 nights after the procedure, sleep in a recliner chair or with your head propped up with some pillows. If you keep your head above your heart level for the first 2 days, it will significantly cut down on post-op swelling. The less swelling, the less pain.

SWELLING: Most people get some swelling and, if they do, it usually happens about 24-48 hours after the surgery. Using the ice bag and sleeping inclined as directed above will help a great deal with keeping it to a minimum. Any increase in swelling or pain after the first 3 days may be a sign of infection. Please call our office if this occurs.

ORAL HYGIENE: Do not use a water-pik or electric toothbrush for the first 8 weeks after the graft procedure. Do not brush the area of the graft until after the first post-operative visit (2 weeks). Use a wet q-tip soaked in the chlorhexidine rinse we have provided to gently "brush" the tooth/teeth worked on around the gum line. You can brush the areas not worked on. Do not floss around the graft area for 2 weeks.

STITCHES: The stitches will be removed at one of your post-operative visits although sometimes they may dislodge. If this occurs, please call the office. After a period of healing, the 1st layer of the graft will usually fall off. Healthy new tissue is underneath, similar to a scab on your skin. Do not be alarmed as this is normal and it is not the graft coming off.

STENT: For grafts taken from the palate, you will be provided with a comfort appliance. It is recommended that you use it for at least the first 2 days and thereafter as needed. It can be worn when drinking or eating soft foods. The topical numbing ointment (Orabase with benzocaine) should be applied to the palate side of the stent only when discomfort occurs. Please keep the stent as we may use it again in the future.

RINSES: We have provided you with a chlorhexidine rinse. Use this 3 times a day with no eating or drinking for 30 minutes afterwards. Rinse your mouth out (don't swish). After 1 week you can switch to dabbing the area only with a q-tip soaked in the chlorhexidine and continue rinsing the whole mouth with salt water. Warm salt water rinses (1/2 tsp salt in 8 ounce glass of warm water). Hold this in the mouth for 30 seconds and spit out. Do this 3 times a day for another 10 days. Start the day after the procedure.

EXERCISE: Avoid strenuous exercise for the first 7 days. Strenuous physical activity may increase post-operative pain or cause post-operative bleeding and swelling.

TOUCHING THE SURGICAL SITE: It is important the surgical site remains untouched during the initial stages of healing. We recommend that you avoid stretching your mouth to look at the site, use caution when washing your face, and avoid playing with your tongue around the surgical site.

BLEEDING: "Pink" saliva is normal for a few days. If you get any bleeding, the usual source is the donor site (roof of the mouth). Most patients will have some. Apply gentle (it doesn't need to be very hard) pressure to the palate (roof of the mouth) for 10 straight minutes with a soaking wet tea bag (black tea works the best), or a soaking wet gauze pad, or a clean washcloth, etc. Be sure it is soaking wet. If it is not, the clot will stick to it and start bleeding again when you pull it away. If it just won't stop, please call the office.

FOOD: Stay on a soft diet, chew away from the grafted tooth/teeth and avoid any foods that would be more likely to get stuck in the gum graft site, such as corn, popcorn, nuts, and seeds (fruits like strawberries have seeds). Do this for up to 2 weeks. Citric juices, carbonated beverages or acidic foods, such as tomatoes, may cause some pain but won't damage the graft healing. For the first 7 days avoid really hot foods or drinks. Consider a nutritional food supplement (Carnation Instant Breakfast drink, Ensure, Slim-Fast etc). Ensure makes a product called Glucena for diabetics. After 2 weeks please continue to use caution, however for the most part, you may return to your normal diet. Don't use straws for the 1st week.

SMOKING: Graft failure rates triple with smoking within the first 7 days after the graft procedure. Smoking will also cause increased post-operative pain.

ASPIRIN/NSAIDS: Unless you have a special medical reason for taking aspirin or aspirin containing medications, ibuprofen or other NSAIDs (tell us at least a week ahead of time if this is the case), do not take these products for 7 days prior up until 7 days after the graft procedure. These medications can cause bleeding.