

## **POST-SURGICAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR GUM GRAFTING**

Proper care of your mouth following periodontal surgery is very important for the healing process. Each person responds differently and the post-operative discomfort, swelling, and bleeding may vary. Please follow these instructions carefully to speed healing and make you more comfortable.

### **DISCOMFORT AND MEDICATIONS**

- Please take medications as directed. Variation from the prescribed regimen can affect healing and success of the surgical procedure.
- Majority of the discomfort is typically within the first 24-72 hours following surgery.
- Pain medication has been prescribed and is best started before the numbness wears off. If taking a narcotic, it is recommended to take it with food, avoid alcohol, and do not drive.
- Antibiotics are to be taken until gone unless otherwise directed. It is recommended to take probiotics to decrease gastrointestinal problems.
- Call if you experience a rash, itchiness, severe dizziness, difficulty breathing, fever, or diarrhea.

### **SWELLING**

- Slight swelling and/or bruising of the surgical area is not unusual and may occur after surgery.
- Gently apply an ice pack wrapped in a thin cloth towel to the outside of your face to minimize the swelling for the first day of surgery (10 minutes on and then off).
- Keep your head elevated above the level of your heart during the first 24 hours. This may necessitate the use of several pillows while sleeping.
- If swelling does occur, it should start to disappear in 3-4 days. If needed after the second day, apply moist heat to the area.

### **BLEEDING**

- Bleeding/oozing may occur for the first 24-48 hours after surgery. If excessive bleeding occurs, apply a moist cold gauze or cold clean tea bag with firm, direct pressure to the surgical site (the tannic acid in the tea will aid in clotting).
- AVOID any positive or negative pressure which may dislodge your clot (such as forceful spitting, rinsing, drinking through a straw, or blowing your nose forcefully).
- AVOID exercise for 1 week minimum.

### **SUTURES**

- Sutures (stitches) have been placed to hold the gums in the proper position for the ideal healing. Some sutures will dissolve on their own. Others will usually be removed 1-2 weeks after surgery depending on your procedure. Some may be left longer, depending on procedure.
- **DO NOT** disturb the sutures with your tongue, toothbrush, or in any other manner since displacement may impair healing.

### **APPEARANCE OF THE GRAFT**

- During the normal course of healing, the tissue graft may change appearance and color. The color may appear white/gray/red during the healing period. Do NOT be alarmed by the appearance of the graft.
- To minimize the chance of failure, remember that the graft sites should not be disturbed.

Minimize movement of the lips and mouth by not pulling your lip out to look at the graft.

- You may have a periodontal dressing placed around the surgical site. Do not be alarmed if pieces of the dressing or the entire dressing falls off during healing. If the dressing is loose, do not pull it off!
- For your comfort and to protect the surgical area, do not chew until the numbness has subsided. Avoid chewing in the area of the surgery until after sutures are removed. A soft diet is recommended until otherwise directed.
- Remember to drink plenty of liquids and maintain a diet with a normal caloric level. Soft foods high in protein, minerals and vitamins (such as soup, eggs, yogurt, cottage cheese, fish, bananas, applesauce, protein shakes, etc.) help support post-surgical healing.
- When in doubt, blend your food and eat with a spoon. No straws!
- AVOID hard, fibrous, sharp or spicy foods as they may delay the healing (especially seeds, chips, nuts, and popcorn).
- AVOID anything too hot for 48 hours after surgery; cool to lukewarm food and liquids are recommended.

#### **ORAL HYGIENE**

- Continue to brush and floss the teeth which were NOT involved in the surgery.
- The surgical site should NOT be disturbed until directed by your doctor at the follow up.
- Starting the day after surgery, take ½ a cup of warm water with a pinch of salt and lean over to soak the surgical sites for a few seconds at a time, then kindly spit it out. Can do this 3-5 times a day starting the day after surgery. **Do not use other mouthwashes.**
- You will be instructed when to resume brushing and will be given a special toothbrush to use at one of your post-operative appointments. REST
- Avoid strenuous physical activity, heavy lifting and bending over during your immediate recovery period, usually 2-3 days. This will help to reduce pain, swelling, and help prevent additional bleeding.
- Rest with your head elevated the remainder of the day and sleep with an extra pillow for several nights.

#### **SMOKING**

- All smoking should be STOPPED until your sutures have been removed to ensure the best healing and success of your surgical procedure.
- Smoking delays the healing process, increases discomfort, and may encourage bleeding and infection. • Surgical success rates are decreased in smokers.

#### **DENTURES/NIGHTGUARDS**

- Your dentist will decide when dentures or nightguards may be worn after the surgery. They must be worn with caution, as pressure can negatively affect the surgical site.