

# POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

Care of the mouth after surgery has an important effect on healing. Depending on the extent, nature, and location of surgery; swelling, discomfort, slight oozing of blood, and restricted jaw movement should be expected. These need not cause alarm and may be minimized if the following post-operative instructions are followed:

## **Bleeding**

A folded gauze has been placed in the area of surgery prior to your leaving the office. Bite on this gauze with constant, firm pressure. After 20-30 minutes remove the gauze and if there is continued bleeding: sit upright, place new gauze over the surgical site and bite down for 1 hour. ***DO NOT SPIT OR TAKE THE GAUZE OUT!*** Bring any fluids forward with your tongue and wipe with a towel or gauze. If after the second gauze bleeding continues place a moistened tea bag over the area and bite down for 1 hour (place tea bag in a cup with warm water, remove from water, and squeeze out the excess water from the bag by hand).

It is not unusual to have slight oozing for 24 hours and periodic break through bleeding for 10 days after an oral surgical procedure. Remember, a drop or two of blood mixed with saliva may seem like more blood than there really is. The most effective means to stop bleeding is firm biting pressure on gauze correctly placed over the surgical site.

### To minimize bleeding:

- Place a folded gauze directly over the surgical site and bite down with firm pressure
- Avoid spitting or rinsing your mouth on the day of surgery
- Do not replace the gauze if there is only slight oozing
- Do not place a large bulky gauze pack, for it will only put pressure on the nearby teeth and not in the area of bleeding

## **Swelling**

You may experience swelling after surgery. The swelling peaks in appearance in 2-3 days and take up to 10 days to return to normal. Applying ice packs for the first 24 hours, 20 minutes per side, and elevating your head may help decrease swelling. If you experience swelling several weeks after your surgery, please make an appointment to see Dr. Ehsan.

### To minimize swelling:

- Apply an ice bag to the operated side of your face as soon as you arrive home
- Wrap the ice bag in paper towel before applying to your face
- Apply cold for 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off cycles for the first 24-48 hours
- After 2 days you should switch to warm moist heat packs (place moist towel in microwave until warm or rinse towel in hot water and squeeze excess water) and warm mouth rinses

## **Pain**

Pain should be expected and medication usually will be prescribed to make you comfortable. You will be numb (pain free) after your surgery for two hours. You should start taking your pain pills before the numbness wears off. Remember, after pain medication is swallowed it may take one hour to take effect.

The discomfort may be greatest for most patients on the night of surgery. Some patients report greatest discomfort second or third day after surgery (coinciding with greatest swelling). All narcotic-containing medications may impair the mental and physical abilities required for performance of potentially hazardous tasks such as driving a car or operating machinery.

### To minimize pain

- 30 minutes after surgery remove gauze packs, eat soft food, and start taking your pain medication
- If you have taken your pain medication and are still uncomfortable, you may take Ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil) in between your prescription pain pill schedule.

### **Diet**

Eat whatever is comfortable. You may require soft or liquid foods for 2-7 days. Avoid foods that require hard chewing. It is very important to maintain good dietary intake even if only liquids.

- Soft foods: soup, mashed potatoes, eggs, yogurt, pudding, Jell-O, ice cream...
- Avoid chips, popcorn, and peanuts...
- Avoid drinking through a straw
- Avoid alcohol

### **Nausea**

Nausea may accompany the discomfort during the initial post-operative period. Small sips of 7-UP, ginger ale, or broth may help. Sometimes nausea and vomiting are associated with narcotic pain medications. Taking your pain medication on a full stomach can alleviate this problem. If nausea continues you may want to stop the prescribed pain medication and switch to regular Tylenol or Ibuprofen.

### **Care of the mouth**

- Do not rinse your mouth or brush your teeth until the day after your surgery
- Starting 24 hours after surgery gently rinse with water. Every time you eat, rinse your mouth with water
  - to flush out food particles.
- Resume routine brushing of teeth and oral care starting 24 hours after surgery
- Avoid smoking, alcohol, or drinking through a straw, as these may disrupt the healing, cause bleeding, and or pain.

### **Activity**

- No heavy lifting or strenuous exercise for at least 2 days after surgery
- Avoid over fatigue. Go to bed early at night and get adequate rest during the day

### **Sutures**

- Your stitches, if you have them, will dissolve in 2-10 days and fall out on their own.

### **Antibiotics**

If you are given a prescription for an antibiotic, have it filled and take ALL of the medication according to the instructions on the label. Most oral antibiotics are best taken with a full glass of water on an empty stomach. Keep taking the antibiotic for the full treatment time even if you begin to feel better. If you develop an adverse reaction (i.e. rash or itching) discontinue the antibiotic and contact the office.

Female patients on antibiotics should be aware that oral contraceptive (birth control) pills may be less effective while taking antibiotics. You should use a second method of birth control while taking antibiotics.

Most patients do not need antibiotics and one will be prescribed if indicated

### **Denture patients**

If a denture was placed at the time of surgery, do not remove for 24 hours after surgery

### **POST-OPERATIVE CONDITIONS**

The following post-operative conditions may occur in some patients while healing is progressing normally:

1. **Swelling on one or both sides of the jaws/face**
2. **Tightness of the muscles (Trismus) causing limited opening**
3. **Ear-ache or sore throat**
4. **Discoloration (black/blue) of face and neck skin**
5. **Other teeth may ache temporarily**
6. **Cracking and soreness of the corners of the mouth- apply Vaseline**

7. There may be a “hole” in your gum after surgery. This is the tooth socket. It will fill with time
8. If you are in doubt about your post-operative course, make an appointment to see Dr. Ehsan

**NOTE**

In case of questions or problems call the main office **415-395-9987** so that the emergency on-call doctor can be paged