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Soft Tissue Grafting Post-Operative Instructions

You just had your soft tissue graft surgery done, now what? You want to be gentle with the surgery site, but you also want to keep it clean. If too much bacteria, plaque, and other debris build up around the site, it will inhibit the healing and not allow the best result. Smoking, trauma to area, heavy plaque buildup and other harmful things will cause the grafted area to not heal as optimally as it should.

FIRST WEEK: 0-7 days Post surgery

- Brush and floss all the teeth as you normally would with a soft bristled toothbrush, except around the surgery site.
- For the teeth around the surgery site, you can gently brush the tops of the teeth (chewing surfaces) to remove any debris.
- The tongue side of your teeth (lingual surfaces) can be gently brushed in the area of the surgery site. Be careful of the sutures that are usually at the gum line (the area where the tooth emerges from your gums).
- For the outside surfaces of the teeth in the surgery area, a Q-tip can be used to clean the surface of the tooth, being careful to not stretch your lips or cheeks too much.
- **Ice:** Use ice in the area of surgery to minimize the swelling. 10 minutes on/10 minutes off for several cycles. Do this icing in the first 24/48hour period to aid the healing process and minimize swelling. Use a pillow case or cloth around the ice pack so you don't get "freezer burn" on your skin. If you spend a lot of time outdoors during our hot summer months, there is a higher risk for swelling due to the hot temperatures.
- **Rest/Recovery:** The first 24/48 hours after surgery is critical in allowing the best healing. You need to cut your normal activities in half. Your body needs to use all its energy toward the healing process. This may be the most difficult thing, because it means that you must slow down for a couple of days. Avoid pulling your lip and cheek in area of the graft, so that it can heal undisturbed.
- **Eating:** Initially right after your surgery 24/48 hours- you will start with soft foods like; soups, yogurts, milkshakes, etc. Do most of your chewing on the opposite side of your mouth from where the surgery was done. When eating, be careful not to eat sharp edged foods (chips, sourdough bread) in area of surgery.
- **Sutures:** After 1 week, we typically remove the first layer of sutures. You will have an appointment for this visit.
- **Pain Medications/Antibiotics:** Take the prescription as indicated. Take the pain medication as soon as you get home with some food (yogurt, deli meat, etc). The antibiotic can sometimes cause an upset stomach, so a light snack can help with this. You will still be numb from the surgery so it's important to start the pain medication before the anesthetic wears off. The most soreness from this surgery follows the next several days after the surgery 24-72 hours. You should take the pain med as prescribed which is usually every 4 hours. If you are inconsistent with the medication, pain can come back and it can take longer for you to get the pain back under control. Do not drink alcohol with your pain medication nor operate heavy machinery.

- **Mouth rinses:** Warm saltwater rinse is best during this first week to aid in tissue recovery. Discontinue any over the counter (OTC) mouth wash or rinses during this first week that you may normally use.
- **Smoking:** If you are a smoker, then it is best not to smoke for 2 weeks following your surgery. This will give you a better chance for the grafted site to heal normally. This might be a good time to stop smoking all together. You can do it!
- **Bleeding:** There will be normal post operative seepage (blood and saliva) from the surgery site. It should not be excessive, but there will be some. When you wake up in the morning there may be blood on your pillow case from seepage during the night. If you take a blood thinner, it will take longer for your bleeding to stop. Avoid aspirin for 2 days after your surgery, since this is a blood thinner. We will discuss this with you at your appointment.
- **Pain:** For Patients who decided to use their own tissue for the graft, your healing time will take longer. Typically we remove tissue from the roof of your mouth and this site will be very sore for at least 1-2 weeks. You may need to continue your pain meds during this healing time. The color of the tissue will be more red than normal. This redness will subside as the graft is healing. The tissues around the surgery site will be more swollen, this will also go down as it heals.

If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact the office at (778) 721-0011 or Dr. Sanders' cell (250) 307-7757.

