

Post-operative Instructions

Post-operative care is very important. Unnecessary pain and complications can be minimized if instructions are followed carefully.

Bleeding

A certain amount of bleeding is to be expected following surgery. Slight bleeding, oozing, or redness in the saliva is not uncommon. Excessive bleeding may be controlled by first rinsing or wiping any old clots from your mouth, then placing a moist gauze pad over the area and biting firmly for fifteen minutes. If the bleeding originates from an area you cannot bite down on, apply firm pressure with moist gauze on the site of bleeding for fifteen minutes. Repeat if necessary. Use a squeeze dried tea bag instead of gauze for sixty minutes if bleeding does not subside. Tannic acid in dry tea bags helps to form a clot. To minimize further bleeding, sit upright as much as you can and avoid exercise for one week. If bleeding does not subside, call for further instructions.

Swelling

Swelling is usually proportional to the surgery involved. Swelling around the mouth, cheeks, and sides of the face is normal and is the body's normal reaction to surgery and tissue repair. Swelling will not become apparent until the day following surgery and will not reach its maximum until 2-3 days post-operatively. However, swelling may be minimized by the immediate use of ice packs. A bag filled with ice, or ice packs should be applied to the side of the face where surgery was performed. The ice packs should be applied "10 minutes on and 10 minutes off" while you are awake. After 24 hours, ice has no beneficial effect. If swelling or jaw stiffness has persisted for several days, there is no cause for alarm. This is a normal reaction to surgery. Thirty-six hours following surgery, the application of moist heat to the sides of the face is beneficial in reducing the size of the swelling. Sleep somewhat inclined for the first 2 nights after the procedure. If you keep your head above your heart level for the first 2 days, it will significantly cut down on post-op swelling.

If you were prescribed a Medrol Dose Pack make sure you start taking the tablets soon after the surgery, as this will reduce swelling.

Pain

Take 3 pills of Ibuprofen 200 mg (Motrin, Advil) three times a day **OR** 2 pills of Naproxen 220 mg (Aleve) twice a day.

Also take one tablet of acetaminophen 500 mg (Tylenol Extra Strength) three times a day alternating or together with Ibuprofen or Naproxen. Please remember to not take any other medication, which may contain acetaminophen.

A combination of a peripherally acting anti-inflammatory drug, such as Ibuprofen or Naproxen, and a centrally acting analgesic drug, such as acetaminophen, is a very effective way of controlling post-operative discomfort. In fact it has been shown to be as effective as a narcotic drug, such as codeine but with much less risks and side effects.

We may have given you a prescription for Celecoxib (Celebrex) 200 mg if your primary care physician has advised you not to take Ibuprofen because of a stomach ulcer or anticoagulation therapy. Instead of taking Ibuprofen, please take 2 tablets of Celecoxib as soon as the procedure is completed. Afterwards take one tablet twice a day for three days. Do not take Celecoxib for longer than three days.

For severe pain, take the narcotic prescribed as directed. The narcotic pain medicine will make you groggy and will slow down your reflexes. Do not drive an automobile or work around machinery. Do not consume alcohol.

Pain or discomfort following surgery normally peaks at three days and should subside more and more every day after that. If pain is getting worse after the third day, it may require attention and you should call me.

Diet

Once the numbness wears off do not use straws. Drink from a glass. The sucking motion can cause more bleeding by dislodging the blood clot. You should prevent dehydration by taking fluids regularly. Stay on a soft diet, chew away from the surgical area and avoid any foods

that would be more likely to get stuck in the surgical site, such as corn, popcorn, nuts, and seeds (fruits like strawberries have seeds). Do this for up to 3 weeks (6 weeks for implant surgeries and soft tissue grafting procedures). It is crucially important for the success of dental implants and soft tissue grafts that they can heal undisturbed for at least 6 weeks. Hence, we recommend staying on a soft diet for the first 6 weeks if you have received dental implants or soft tissue grafts. For the first 7 days avoid really hot foods or drinks, citric juices, carbonated beverages or acidic foods, like tomatoes.

Keep the mouth clean

You should brush the areas not worked on with your usual toothbrush. However, the surgical site should be kept alone for the first week. Start brushing your teeth in the surgical area gently with the "soft-bristled" manual toothbrush we gave you one week after the procedure.

No rinsing of any kind should be performed until the day following surgery. If we prescribed a Chlorhexidine rinse (Peridex) you should begin rinsing 2-3 times a day the day after the surgery for one week. Peridex is antiseptic and will help keeping the surgical site clean.

Do not use a water-pik around the surgical area for at least 6 weeks after the procedure. Do not floss around the tooth/teeth near the area worked on until the stitches are out.

Do not touch the surgical site

It is important that 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 on the surgical sites. Do not touch the surgical site with your fingers, as they may carry bacteria to the wound.

Discoloration or bruising

In some cases, discoloration of the skin follows swelling. The development of black, blue, green, or yellow discoloration is due to blood spreading beneath the tissues. This is a normal post-operative occurrence, which may occur 2-3 days post-operatively. Moist heat applied to the area may speed up the removal of the discoloration.

Antibiotics

If you have been placed on antibiotics, take the tablets as directed. Antibiotics will be given to help prevent infection. Discontinue antibiotic use immediately in the event of a rash or severe diarrhea and call me in the office or on my cell phone.

Smoking prohibited

Complication rates triple with smoking during the healing phase and the chances of the surgery not being successful and having to be re-done is significantly increased. Consequently, smoking is absolutely prohibited for at least 2 weeks after the procedure.

Special considerations after sinus lift procedures

If you must sneeze, do so with your mouth open to avoid unnecessary pressure on the sinus. No not nose blow for one week. Avoid playing wind instruments until cleared by the surgeon. If you feel air flow at the surgical site, please contact our office. If you feel congested, you may need to use antihistamines or decongestants. Over-the-counter products such as Tavist-D, Dimetapp, or Pseudofed work well.

Finally

Stiffness (Trismus) of the jaw muscles may cause difficulty in opening your mouth for a few days following surgery. This is a normal post-operative event, which will resolve in time.

Sutures sometimes become dislodged, this is no cause for alarm. Just remove the suture from your mouth and discard it. The sutures will be removed between two and six weeks after surgery.

A dry socket is when the blood clot dissolves prematurely from the tooth socket. Symptoms of pain at the surgical site may occur 2-3 days following surgery. Pain should not increase with time. Call the office if this occurs.