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Post-Operative Instructions for Periodontal (Gum) Surgery & Periodontal (Gum) Grafts

1. Bleeding will likely be present for several hours, and oozing which results in bright red saliva is common for 24 hours after surgery. If there is excessive bleeding, remove any clots with a gauze square, and place moderate but constant pressure over the bleeding area with a damp tea bag. Hold in place for at least 30 minutes. If this is not successful, call us. Avoid forceful rinsing for 48 hours; for minor bleeding, gently rinse with cold tea.
2. **For Grafts:** The (upper) surgical stent should be worn full-time (even while rinsing with water or oral rinse) for three to four days. It may be removed to be washed under cold water and replaced immediately. (Do your rinsing with stent in place.) After four full days, you may wear the stent or not, as comfortable. Leaving it in place will help protect the donor site and reduce bleeding. Always keep your stent available during the first week of healing to put in place should bleeding begin. Do bring the stent with you to the office if you need to see us for any bleeding problems.
3. Swelling is to be expected, often peaks on the 3rd day and is usually gone by the seventh day. Apply an ice bag to the side of your face where the surgery was performed to help reduce swelling. Hold ice in place for 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off for 48 hours. Some swelling and discoloration of the skin are common and need not cause alarm. However, if swelling continues to enlarge after three days or if the swelling is hot/red, contact our office immediately. Normal swelling may last for 7- 10 days. Sleeping with the head elevated (an extra pillow or two) can help reduce swelling or discomfort. Starting three days after surgery (two days of using ice + one extra day), moist heat (heating pad, etc.) over the surgerized area will help reduce residual swelling.
4. Food: Please do not eat, drink, or rinse your mouth for 3 hours after surgery. After 3 hours, begin with liquid foods for 7 days and then soft/ liquid foods for 3 weeks. Avoid foods likely to get caught in the surgery site or tear the stitches such as chips, nuts, rice, popcorn, etc. Avoid hot food, drinks, or active chewing while your mouth is still numb; avoid very hot food and drinks for two weeks. Blended (drinkable) foods, and protein/nutritional drinks are very helpful during this period. Drink at least 6-8 large glasses of liquids per day to avoid dehydration, fever, possible shock, and possible hospitalization.
5. Surgical Dressing, if present around your teeth, is to protect the surgical area and facilitate healing. It should stay in place until your next appointment. Small particles of dressing may chip off from time to time; this is normal. If the entire dressing comes loose, or if you feel discomfort, please call. Do not over-exercise your mouth or lips or try to see the surgical site. This may accidentally tear the sutures or displace the dressing and graft tissue. Drink cold fluids during the first 24 hours; this will keep the dressing hard.
6. Stitches (Sutures) may dissolve on their own or may need to be removed in one week. This will be taken care of at your post-operative appointment. Stitches falling out present no problems unless persistent bleeding occurs or the gum tissue becomes loose.
7. Alcohol and Smoking should be avoided for one week following periodontal surgery and gum grafts.

8. Avoid the following during the recuperation period:

- Spitting or rinsing hard for several days
- Using a straw
- Carbonated (fizzy) drinks
- Smoking and alcohol for one week with periodontal (gum) surgery and grafts
- Sedatives
- Hot liquids
- Electric toothbrush or vigorous tooth brushing
- Vigorous activity for one week
- Contact sports for one week or longer

9. Oral Hygiene will speed healing and reduce odor and infection; one day after surgery begin rinsing your mouth gently with warm (not hot) salt water. (One rounded teaspoon of salt in a tall glass of warm water) Allow the salty water to remain in the mouth for 30 seconds but DO NOT rinse vigorously. Rinse 4 times daily for 5 days. You may also begin regular brushing and flossing teeth not involved in the surgery. Avoid areas of surgery, sutures, or dressing. Please use fluoride toothpaste; and over-the-counter mouth rinses may be used if diluted in half with water. Your prescription oral rinse should be used for 30 full seconds twice daily.

10. Discomfort and Pain Medications: Follow directions on the bottle. Expect 2-3 days of significant discomfort following surgery. Take your over-the-counter ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil, Nuprin), naproxyn (Naprosyn, Aleve), aspirin or Tylenol regularly for 3-5 days as recommended. Add in your prescription pain medication as needed. Take your medication before the numbness wears off. For extended discomfort, use Ibuprofen 600mg (3 Advil or Nuprin) with 2 extra strength Tylenol every 6 hours with a tall warm drink, as necessary.

Begin taking your pain medication at _____ so that it has time to take effect prior to the numbing wearing off. Pain medication can cause upset stomach and nausea; therefore, it is best to take with food. Any medication which may cause stomach upset and nausea should be taken with a tall, hot/warm, drink, soft foods, and/or antacids (ask your pharmacist). You should rest (minimize movement) when taking narcotic pain medications and call us if vomiting occurs.

11. Fever (under 101°) is usually due to decreased fluid intake, vomiting, and dehydration. It usually responds well to increased fluid intake; at least 6-8 large glasses of liquid per day. Fever of 102° and above may be a sign of infection and you should notify us immediately.

12. Please call us if you experience any of the following:

- Vomiting
- Generalized rash or itch
- Bloody or persistent diarrhea
- Increasing pain or swelling after the 3rd day
- Fever greater than 101 degrees
- Foul taste or discharge in the mouth
- If numbness continues for more than 12 hours
- Other surgery-related problems

Thank You,
Dr. Bob Finkel & Staff