

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CARE FOLLOWING PERIODONTAL SURGERY

A certain amount of swelling and discomfort is common following most procedures. It is often greatest at 3-5 days following surgery and can persist for up to a week. Since you may be taking pain medications that make you sleepy, don't plan any significant activities for the rest of the day. Sleeping, reading or watching TV is recommended. It is also a good idea to keep a light schedule for a day or two after surgery. When lying down, keep your head slightly elevated by using a pillow or sitting in a reclining chair. Try not to touch the surgical area with your tongue any more than necessary, and avoid rubbing the outside of your face with your hands. This can damage the surgical site or dislodge the dressing and/or sutures.

PAIN MEDICATIONS/DIET: Take your pain medications as prescribed. Since it is generally better to have something on your stomach prior to taking your medication, try to eat a light snack soon after surgery. Limit your eating to soft, bland, nutritious foods, such as soup, mashed potatoes, ice cream, Instant Breakfast™, Ensure™ etc., for the first few days after surgery. As much as possible, limit your chewing to non-surgical areas, but do eat. It will help you tolerate your medications and make you feel better overall. Don't forget to drink extra amounts of non-caffeinated, non-alcoholic fluids. This will help you to avoid dehydration.

BRUSHING: Good oral hygiene is important for proper healing, but don't brush or floss the surgical area until the day following surgery. Starting on the day after surgery, gently brush the tops of the teeth. Cotton swabs dipped in toothpaste or mouthwash can also be used to gently clean the sides of the teeth in the surgically treated area, if no surgical dressing is in place. As soreness decreases, usually after about a week, more aggressive measures can be used, including brushing with a soft-bristled toothbrush and flossing. Naturally, teeth not in the surgical area should be brushed and flossed daily as usual.

SMOKING: Use of tobacco products is strongly discouraged, particularly after periodontal surgery, as it causes delayed and/or impaired healing. If you are unable to refrain from smoking completely, keep it to an absolute minimum during the healing phase.

SWELLING: Some swelling is normal, but it can be minimized by application of an ice pack or cold compress to the outside of the face adjacent to the surgical area. Apply the cold for 10-15 minutes on, and then 10-15 minutes off, for 4-5 hours following surgery. The sooner it is applied after completion of surgery, the more effective it will be. Starting on the day after surgery, cold compresses can be discontinued.

BLEEDING: A slight amount of oozing following surgery is not uncommon. A small amount of blood mixed with saliva may appear worse than it really is, but if the bleeding is excessive or continuous over a long period of time, take a dampened cotton gauzes and apply pressure to the area where the bleeding appears to be originating from. Keep firm pressure for at least 20-30 minutes, and then avoid overly vigorous, rinsing thereafter. If you lie down, keep your head slightly elevated and don't forget to place a towel over your pillow to prevent possible staining.

DRESSING: A smooth, plastic-like surgical dressing is sometimes placed around the teeth in the surgical area to protect the surgical site. If it comes loose before the one-week follow-up appointment, don't be alarmed. Simply tease it completely loose with your fingers or a pair of tweezers and discard it

FOLLOWUP: You will be appointed for a post-surgical follow-up approximately 10 days after surgery for removal of the dressing and sutures. This appointment will only take about 15 minutes and normally does not require the use of anesthesia. Additional appointments will be scheduled as needed.

In summary, depending on the type of surgical procedure performed, residual discomfort and swelling can persist for a week or more, so try not to be alarmed or impatient if you are still in discomfort after only a few days. Continue to take your medications as prescribed and closely abide by the instructions provided above. If you can do this, most serious complications will be avoided; however, if a situation occurs that you can't control, don't hesitate to call for advice or emergency treatment.

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