

# Connective tissue gum graft post-operative instructions

**Antibiotic** If an antibiotic has been prescribed, start taking it the first day (unless directed otherwise) and use to completion. You can reduce stomach upset by taking it with food and/or plenty of liquid.

**Ibuprofen** Unless you have a reason you can't take ibuprofen (such as an allergy to ibuprofen or aspirin, or a stomach ulcer), take 800mg of ibuprofen at a time, 3 times per day. Start the day of the gum graft surgery, and take for the next 2 days. After that you can still take it as needed for pain. Do not use ibuprofen for more than one week.

**Pain pills** Take one pain pill as soon as you can after surgery. It will usually work better if taken before the numbness wears off. After that, take only as needed. Take any narcotic pain pills with food and/or plenty of liquid. Do not drive after taking any narcotic pain pill and do not take them with sleeping pills or alcohol.

**Ice bag** Use a cold pack (a plastic bag of frozen peas works well) to the face over the area where the procedure was done for 10 minutes at a time, twice an hour, for the first 6 hours. You can periodically use an ice bag the rest of the day of surgery and the next day. If you use the ice bag as directed, you should have less swelling than you would have otherwise. The less swelling, the less pain. Do not use hot packs or a hot water bottle.

**Sleep somewhat inclined** For the first 2 nights after the procedure, sleep in a recliner chair or with your head propped up with some pillows. A recliner is better. If you keep your head above your heart level for the first 2 days, it will significantly cut down on post-op swelling. The less swelling, the less pain.

**Swelling** Most people get some swelling and, if they do, it usually happens about 48-72 hours after surgery. Using the ice bag and sleeping inclined as directed above will help a great deal with keeping it to a minimum.

**Liquid in the brown jar** is chlorhexidine (Peridex®), a topical antiseptic. Use a Q-tip to apply it. The ear cleaning Q-tips work best, as they are very absorbent and hold a good size drop of liquid. Apply about 3 times/day for 3 weeks to the surgical site by dabbing the soaked in chlorhexidine Q-tip to the surgical area. Do *not* scrub it in. During the 1<sup>st</sup> 4 weeks, whenever you do start any tooth brushing in the surgical site, dip the toothbrush in the chlorhexidine, as well. If you run out, call us to pick up more. Once this liquid is applied, do not eat, drink or rinse out for 30 minutes.

**Red handled toothbrush (if we gave you one)** This is a Tepe Special Care® toothbrush. It is soft as a mop, so is not a very good "cleaning" toothbrush, but helps without damaging the surgical site until it is healed better. It is for use in the surgical area only. As noted above, dip it in the chlorhexidine. Use this toothbrush, as directed, between weeks 1 and 2. Don't brush the graft site during the 1<sup>st</sup> week. If we placed a periodontal dressing (pink cast) you can lightly clean the dressing with this toothbrush dipped in chlorhexidine starting the next day. Use a regular toothbrush in the non-surgical areas.

**Oral hygiene** Do not use a water-pik or an electric toothbrush around the graft area for 6 weeks after the procedure. After that, it should be OK. Around the area of the graft, for the first 7 days, do not brush, even with a hand held toothbrush. You can brush the areas not worked on. After 7 days, a soft toothbrush gently used around the tooth/teeth where the graft was placed is OK as noted above regarding the red handled toothbrush. Do not floss around the tooth/teeth worked on for 4 weeks, so you don't accidentally take out any of the stitches. After 4 weeks, there should be no oral hygiene restrictions, except for water-piks & electric toothbrushes as noted above.

**Salt-water rinses** Rinse your mouth out (don't swish) with warm salt water (1/2-tsp. salt in 8-ounce glass of warm water). Hold this in the mouth for 30 seconds and spit out. Repeat. Do this 4-5 times per day for 7 days. Start day after the procedure.

**Exercise** Avoid strenuous exercise for the first 7 days. Strenuous physical activity may increase post-operative pain or cause post-operative bleeding and swelling. Less activity equals less pain.

**Touching 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.

**Stitches** Usually non-dissolvable black silk stitches are used on the palate and they need to be removed in about a week. If they dangle and bother you, cut the dangling part with a small, clean pair of bathroom scissors. All the stitches around the grafted tooth/teeth are dissolvable, meaning they will eventually fall out on their own in 3 to 4 weeks.

**Bleeding** "Pink" saliva is normal for a few days. If you get any bleeding, the usual source is the donor site (roof of the mouth). Many patients will have some. Wipe it clean of any "blood clots" first. It has to be thoroughly cleaned first. Then apply gentle (it doesn't need to be real hard) pressure to the palate (roof of the mouth) for 10 straight minutes with a soaking wet tea bag (black tea works the best), or a soaking wet gauze pad, or a clean washcloth, etc. Be sure it is soaking wet. If it is not, the clot will stick to it and start bleeding again when you pull it away. If it just won't stop, call.

**Food** Stay on a soft diet, chew away from the grafted tooth/teeth and avoid any foods that would be more likely to get stuck in the gum graft site, such as corn, popcorn, nuts, and seeds (fruits like strawberries have seeds). Do this for up to 4 weeks. Citric juices, carbonated beverages or acidic foods, like tomatoes, may make it hurt, but won't damage the graft healing though. For the first 7 days avoid really hot foods or drinks. Several glasses a day for the 1<sup>st</sup> week or 2 of a nutritional food supplement (Carnation Instant Breakfast drink, Ensure, Slim-Fast, etc.) is advisable as a food supplement. Ensure makes a product called Glucerna for diabetics. After 3 weeks, there should be no eating restrictions. Nothing but light sucking with a straw for the first 2 weeks. No milkshakes with a straw for 3 weeks.

**Smoking** Graft failure rates triple with smoking within the first 7 days after the graft procedure. Smoking causes more post-operative pain, as well. If you do smoke, keep it 5 cigarettes or less per day and only smoke half the cigarette. No cigars or pipes.

**Aspirin** Unless you have a special medical reason for taking aspirin (tell us at least a week ahead of time if this is the case), do not take aspirin products for 7 days prior thru 7 days after the graft procedure. Aspirin can cause bleeding.