

Self Care After Surgery

- 1. Stitches:** The threads or stitches which are around & between your teeth keep the gum tissues in the correct position for the first 4 days of healing. Sometimes the stitches become loose. If this occurs, simply clip off the loose end with a pair of small scissors or a nail clipper. After a week, the stitches will be removed.
- 2. Periodontal dressing pack:** If you had gum surgery, then you will most likely have a healing pack or bandage placed. Pieces of this packing may chip off over the first week. Do not be concerned. If the whole packing comes off in the first four days, please call the office.
- 3. Pain:** You will have mild to moderate discomfort after the anesthesia wears off. This will last for 3-5 days. Much of the discomfort can be avoided by controlling the swelling. Tylenol or Motrin usually provide adequate control of the remaining pain. Aspirin interferes with blood clotting and can prolong the bleeding. If you are prescribed Tylenol with codeine, remember that codeine is a narcotic related to morphine & can impair your motor skills. **DO NOT OPERATE MACHINERY SUCH AS A CAR WHEN TAKING THIS DRUG FOR AT LEAST 18 HOURS FOLLOWING YOUR SURGERY.**
- 4. Swelling:** Although some swelling cannot be avoided, you can minimize the swelling and consequently the pain by applying ice packs to the outside of your face over the area of surgery. Apply the ice for 20 minutes and then break for 20 minutes. You should repeat this for the first few hours post-surgery. Cold drinks can also help. Ice cubes in a zip lock bag work nicely as ice packs.
- 5. Bleeding:** Some seepage of blood is normal for several hours after the operation. Avoid creating suction in your mouth that could dislodge the blood clot which is forming to seal the operation site. Suction is initiated by drinking through a straw, forceful spitting, heavy draws on a cigarette and forceful blowing of your nose. You may do all of these things, but remember to be gentle. Avoid rinsing the site for the first 24 hours.
- 6. Infection:** If antibiotics are prescribed, please ensure that the entire course is taken and not to stop taking them as soon as you start feeling better.
- 7. Smoking:** Please refrain from smoking as much as possible during the first week post-surgery. Smoking slows down the healing process and causes more pain and swelling to occur.
- 8. Oral hygiene:** After the first 24 hours, meticulous oral hygiene should be resumed in all areas of your mouth. The cleaner your mouth is kept, the faster it will heal and the more comfortable you will be. Please avoid the actual surgical site with your toothbrush for the first week. **Warm salt water rinses starting tomorrow!**
- 9. Diet:** Drink at least 8 cups of fluid per day and maintain a good nutritious diet. You may find that softer foods are easier to handle for the first few days. Foods such as milk shakes, warm soups (not hot), mashed potatoes, rice, custards, etc. are recommended.
- 10. Immediate dentures:** If you had teeth removed & a denture placed, you will need to leave the denture in place for the first 24 hours. This is because there will be some swelling and if the denture is removed too soon, you will not be able to put it back in. You will then be without teeth for a few days until the swelling subsides. After the 48 hour period, you may gently remove the denture and clean it with some warm water. Then gently rinse your gums with warm salt water (1/2 tsp of salt in a glass of water). Continue to remove and rinse 3-4 times per day. For the first week after surgery, please leave the dentures in at night.

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