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## **POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS FOR GINGIVAL GRAFT**

The critical healing period typically takes from one to two weeks; the graft will take about six weeks to heal completely. Some discomfort, bleeding and swelling should be expected in the next 48 hours as your mouth heals.

As your mouth heals, you can promote faster healing and avoid complications by simply following these instructions.

**Do not disturb the wound.** 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 or brushing directly over. In doing so you may invite irritation, infection and/or bleeding.

**Do not disturb the clot in the surgical site.** Don't switch, spit or use a straw in the next 24-72 hrs after surgery.

**Brushing.** For the first 7 days, do not brush around the area of the graft, even with a hand held regular toothbrush. You can brush the areas not worked on. After 14 days, a soft toothbrush gently used around the tooth/teeth where the graft was placed is OK unless instructed otherwise. Do not use a waterpik or an electric toothbrush around the graft area for 4 weeks after the procedure. After that, it should be OK unless noted otherwise. Do not floss around the tooth/teeth worked on for 1 week, so you don't accidentally take out any of the stitches. After 2 weeks, there should be no oral hygiene restrictions, except for waterpiks & electric toothbrushes.

**Smoking.** Do not use tobacco products or any form of smoking for 3-4 weeks after surgery. Continuing to smoke during these first few days will slow the healing process and could compromise the survival of the graft.

**Bleeding.** There should be minimal bleeding after the surgery is completed. There may be a pink discoloration of your saliva for several hours; frank bleeding (bright red) is not to be expected.

Should bleeding occur, simple pressure from a piece of gauze is usually all that is needed to

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control it. If it continues, place a moistened black tea bag (not herbal tea) over the area and hold it over the bleeding site with firm pressure for 15 minutes. If bleeding does not stop and you become concerned, please call for further instruction and/or assistance. Saliva can be swallowed, even if slightly blood tinged.

**Swelling.** Most people get some swelling and, if they do, it usually happens about 48-72 hours after the surgery. To prevent it, apply an ice pack or a cold towel to the outside of your face in the area of the surgery during the first 12 to 24 hours. Apply alternately, 10-20 minutes on then 10-20 minutes off. If you follow these instructions you should have less swelling than you would have otherwise. If swelling appears 24 hours after the procedure, be patient, apply warm moist heat to the outside of your face and this will help diminish it. Also continue to take your anti-inflammatory medication (ibuprofen) as directed. Supplements like Turmeric, Omega 3 (fish oil) the core of the pineapple are proven to be great anti-inflammatory and aid in healing. Mix it in a smoothie and it's delicious!

**Discoloration.** Some discoloration or bruising of the skin may occur. This is normal.

**Medications.** Some discomfort is normal after surgery. Please follow the instruction on the bottle for any medications prescribed. If any adverse reaction to those medications should arise, such as nausea, itching, swelling, or any allergic symptoms, please contact the office immediately and discontinue all medication immediately. Generally, the following medications are prescribed:

Mild/Moderate Pain: Ibuprofen is an anti-inflammatory, non-narcotic pain killer. This medicine will help prevent swelling along with reducing pain. I recommend that one tablet is taken either prior to surgery or prior to the local anesthetic wearing off. Be sure to have some food in your stomach when taking this medicine – it can upset stomachs. This is your “baseline” pain medication.

Moderate/Severe Pain: Acetaminophen with oxycodone is a narcotic pain reliever and can



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be taken in addition to the ibuprofen, if there is still discomfort. Since acetaminophen with oxycodone can cause drowsiness, it is best taken before bedtime, if needed.

If Antibiotics are prescribed, you should carefully follow the instructions and finish the antibiotics until they are completely gone, as long as there are no adverse reactions or discomfort (redness, itching, etc.)

**Anesthesia Warning.** When a local anesthetic is used your lip, tongue and cheek will be numb for several hours after the procedure. While it is numb, it will feel "funny." During this period you must be careful not to bite, chew, pinch and/or scratch this area, which can lead to serious soft tissue trauma.

**Diet.** For the first 24-48 hours, you should maintain a diet of soft foods, such as eggs, pudding, yogurt, mashed potatoes, soups, fish, etc. Food that crumbles such as potato chips, popcorn, crackers, cookies, etc. should be avoided, as well as seedy fruits like strawberries and blackberries. Hot spicy foods should also be avoided to prevent irritation and burns of the surgery site. Eating immediately following the procedure is not recommended. When the numbness has worn off you may eat, yet be sure to chew on the opposite side for the first 24 hours in order to keep food away from the surgery site. Also, keep anything sharp from entering the wound (e.g., eating utensils, fingers and other objects, etc.). It is also important to drink plenty of fluids in between meals and with meals. Return to normal diet as tolerated.

**Activity.** For the first week to 2 weeks, your activity should be limited because increased activity can lead to increased bleeding.



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PROBLEMS OR QUESTIONS?

If you need to contact Dr. Raul S. Molina or  
your Surgery Coordinator Cindy Kaleel  
please call ph904.731.1324 or after 5:00PM at ph904.314.2507

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