

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 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. If you take an 81mg aspirin daily, taking an NSAID (such as ibuprofen) and aspirin around the same time can reduce the blood thinning effect of aspirin. To avoid this, take the aspirin 8 hours after the last ibuprofen, then wait at least ½ hour before taking any more ibuprofen.

Combination ibuprofen & acetaminophen Take 600mg ibuprofen and 1000mg acetaminophen (Tylenol) at the same time every 6 hours by the clock for the 1st 3 days (day of oral surgery and the next 2 days). Stop this regimen after 3 days. Take 1 oxycodone when you arrive home. After that, take the oxycodone only if needed. **NOTE: Do not consume alcohol the day before or day of surgery and wait 2 days after the last acetaminophen (Tylenol) dose before consuming alcohol. The combination acetaminophen & alcohol is hard on the liver.**

Pain pills or ointment 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. Orabase with benzocaine can be dabbed on the palate as a numbing ointment.

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. Less swelling equals 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. Less swelling equals less pain.

Swelling Most people get some swelling and, if they do, it usually happens about 48-72 hours after the 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 bottle is Chlorhexidine (Peridex®), a topical antiseptic rinse. Gently rinse with ½ ounce (fill line on the bottle cap) for 30 seconds then spit it out. Do not eat, drink or rinse for 30 minutes after using. Use rinse 2 times a day (morning & evening). Use until the bottle is empty.

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

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. Start using the toothbrush during the 2nd week post-surgery. Do not brush the graft site during the 1st week. 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 4 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. 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 water-piks & electric toothbrushes.

Touching the surgical site It is important that the surgical site remains undisturbed 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 and glue The stitches around the tooth/teeth grafted usually last about 5-7 days. The stitches are all dissolvable, meaning they will eventually fall out on their own. There is a glue layer over the graft and stitches. Do not pick it off; it will fall off on it’s own. When something around the graft site falls off 5-7 days after the procedure and it is hard, it’s the glue, not the graft.

Stent The protective stent (plastic covering) made for the roof of the mouth is for your comfort only. It is recommended that you use it for at least the first 2 weeks if you feel comfortable with it. It can be worn when drinking or eating soft foods, or all the time. Take it out when brushing/cleaning your teeth and try to have it out when sleeping. The topical numbing ointment (Orabase with benzocaine) should be applied to the palate side of the stent only if needed. Brush it clean and run it under cold water a few times a day.

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 2 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 1st 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 2 weeks, there should be no eating restrictions. Nothing but light sucking with a straw for the 1st week. No milkshakes with a straw for 2 weeks.

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.

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.

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