



SOFT TISSUE GRAFT POSTOPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY AND CALL OUR OFFICE WITH ANY QUESTIONS PRIOR TO SURGERY

A soft tissue graft is a transplant of a small section of gum tissue. Sometimes the after-effects of soft tissue grafts are quite minimal, so not all of these instructions may apply. Common sense will often dictate what you should do. However, when in doubt, follow these guidelines or call our office for clarification. **Our phone number is (541) 654-5482.**

EXERCISE CARE: Do **NOT** pull your lip out or disturb the gum graft in any way.

ACTIVITY LEVEL: Limit activity the day of surgery. Stay inside and don't do anything. Keep head elevated by relaxing in a chair or using extra pillows while in bed or on the couch. Light activity (50% of normal effort) is okay the following day after surgery for the first week. Avoid activities that change your blood pressure significantly like repetitively bending over and standing up. Moderate activity (80% of normal effort) is okay for the second week. Do not engage in any strenuous activities for 2 weeks. Do not swim for 2 weeks. Your body should spend most of its energy healing.

DIET: Confine the first week's intake to liquids or pureed foods (soups, puddings, yogurt, milk shakes, etc.). Avoid extremely hot foods. Do not use a **straw** until you are advised that it is okay. Gradually progress to solid soft nourishing foods the following week. Avoid chewing anything at the surgery site. Avoid foods like nuts, sunflower seeds, popcorn, etc., which may get lodged in the surgery areas. It is important not to skip meals! If you take nourishment regularly you will feel better, gain strength, have less discomfort and heal faster. If you are a diabetic, maintain your normal eating habits or follow instructions given by your doctor.

MOUTH RINSES: Do not use commercial mouth rinses. Keeping your mouth clean after surgery is essential. Use 1/4 teaspoon of salt dissolved in an 8 ounce glass of warm water to either rinse gently with, or dab sparingly with a cotton swab on the teeth that were treated. Avoid dabbing the gums. Repeat as often as you like, but at least twice daily. This will help with extra comfort and healing. Do not spit liquids out in a forceful manner.

BRUSHING: Brush the areas in your mouth that were not affected by the surgical procedure. Please do not brush the surgical site unless specifically advised to do so by Dr. Dow.

ROOF OF YOUR MOUTH: In the event that tissue was removed from the roof of your mouth, you may be given a plastic "guard" or advised to use another appliance such as your orthodontic retainer or denture. The guard is placed in your mouth at the time of surgery. It can be removed at any time to rinse. The guard should remain in your mouth for the first 48 hours, removing only to brush and rinse/swab as recommended above. The plastic guard can be cleaned with a toothbrush and toothpaste or baking soda. After the first 48 hours you may wear the plastic guard as much or as little as you would like. Wearing it while eating and sleeping may provide more comfort during the healing process. After eating, remove the plastic guard and rinse your mouth and the guard before replacing it in your mouth. Most patients wear the guard for about 2-5 days after surgery.

SMOKING/CHEWING: The use of tobacco products greatly reduces the success of your recovery.

SIDE EFFECTS

Bleeding: Intermittent bleeding or oozing overnight is normal. Bleeding should never be severe. Bleeding from the roof of your mouth may be controlled by placing fresh moist gauze over the area and applying pressure for 30-45 minutes. If bleeding persists or becomes heavy you may substitute a tea bag* (soaked in very hot water, squeezed damp-dry and wrapped in moist gauze) for 30 minutes. If bleeding remains uncontrolled, please call our office.

The tea bag must include tannic acid as an ingredient.

Swelling: Swelling may occur. It can be minimized by wrapping a cold pack, ice bag or bag of frozen peas in a towel and applying firmly to the cheek adjacent to the surgical area. This should be applied for 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off only during the first 24 hours after surgery. If you have been prescribed medicine for the control of swelling, be sure to take it as directed. ***If you can take Ibuprofen; take 600 mg every 6 hours for 3-4 days**

Pain: Our patients report moderate discomfort following the soft tissue grafting; with the greatest discomfort at the site where the tissue was taken. This wound is often described as similar to a “pizza burn” or hot coffee burn on your palate. The discomfort on the roof of your mouth is usually most intense on days 4-8. **Taking Ibuprofen regularly as directed above is the best way to control pain.** You may be given a **prescription for pain medication that can be taken in addition to the Ibuprofen.** Start the pain medication before the anesthetic has worn off to manage possible discomfort. Some patients find that stronger pain medicine causes nausea, but if you precede each pain pill with a small amount of food, chances for nausea will be reduced. The effects of pain medications vary widely among individuals. Some patients may even require two of the pain pills at one time. If you find you are taking large amounts of pain medicine at frequent intervals, please call our office. If you anticipate needing more prescription medication for the weekend, you must call for a refill during weekday business hours.

Nausea: Nausea is not uncommon after surgery. Sometimes pain medications are the cause. Nausea can be reduced by preceding each pain pill with a small amount of soft food, and taking the pill with a large volume of water. Try to keep taking clear fluids and minimize dosing of pain medications, but call us if you do not feel better. We are able to prescribe anti-nausea medications if you experience uncontrolled nausea. Please let us know if you are prone to nausea when taking medications.

It is our desire that your recovery be as smooth and pleasant as possible. Following these instructions will assist you, but if you have questions about your progress, please call our office. Calling during office hours will afford a faster response to your question or concern. If you are having an after-hours emergency please call **Dr. Dow’s cell phone at (541) 937-5417**. Telephone calls for prescription renewals are ONLY accepted during the office hours if 7a-4p.

Your Next visit:

Although it varies, most patients are seen for a postoperative visit about 2 weeks following soft tissue graft surgery. This is a short appointment with the surgical assistant where healing is observed, questions are answered and the sutures **may** be removed.

Patients are usually scheduled 3 months following the procedure for a teeth cleaning and to evaluate the success of the graft.

