

Patient Instructions after Periodontal Surgery

Pain Control

You may have moderate discomfort after the anesthesia wears off. This will last for 3-5 days. Much of the discomfort can be avoided by controlling swelling. Ibuprofen (Advil) can be taken to reduce pain and swelling. You may take three tablets of 200mg each (600mg) every 6 hours as needed (Not more than 2400mg (or twelve 200mg tablets) per day). It is advisable to take the ibuprofen for the first 3 days even if you don't initially have any symptoms in order to prevent the development of pain and swelling. You may also be prescribed a stronger pain medication (Vicodin) just in case. This can be taken at the same time as the ibuprofen following the directions on the bottle. Because it is also to be taken every 6 hours, you can alternate each medication every 3 hours if you are in considerable discomfort: in other words take Ibuprofen, wait 3 hours, take the prescription, wait 3 hours, take Ibuprofen, etc. If the Vicodin makes you ill, you may combine the Advil with Tylenol instead, but do not take extra Tylenol with the Vicodin. For patients having had gum grafts, you may use Oragel in the roof of your mouth for added comfort.

Infection

You may have been prescribed an antibiotic to prevent infection. Please take as directed and until all the tablets are completed. Not completing the regimen may cause antibiotic resistance to the medication and potentially a worse infection than if the antibiotic had not been used. If your medications are causing complications (rash, severe vomiting), please discontinue taking them and call us immediately.

Signs of infection include: a fever of 100 degrees or more, drainage or a bad taste in the mouth, or if the outside of your face is hot and flushed, or continued increase in swelling after 3 days.

Swelling

In some cases, swelling is to be expected. To help alleviate this, ice packs may be applied to the outside of the face over the area of surgery at 15-minute intervals (15 minutes on / 15 minutes off) for the first 48 hours. Swelling usually peaks at about the third day. Ice cubes in a plastic bag, or a bag of frozen peas, work well for an ice pack. It is advisable to use the ice for the first 48 hours even if you don't initially have any symptoms in order to prevent the development of pain and swelling, especially if you are prone to bruising or swelling easily.

Bleeding

Postoperative seepage is normal for several hours after the operation and even overnight. Do not be concerned if traces of blood are noted in the saliva, or if you find a blood clot in your mouth in the morning. Do not rinse the mouth vigorously, as disruption of the blood clot may occur possibly leading to dry socket. If heavy bleeding continues, use the gauze or a damp tea bag to put firm pressure on the area for 30 minutes. If bleeding does not subside, please call us.

Sutures or Dressing

You may have either sutures (stitches) or a periodontal dressing (thick pink packing) around your teeth. If you have had gum grafting, a blue adhesive dressing may be attached to the roof of your mouth or around the graft itself. These should remain in place until your next appointment. Do not be alarmed if the pink or blue packing dislodges, or a few stitches come loose a few days before your next appointment. However, you should call if something comes off within a day or two following surgery. Long stitches can be cut with a scissor cleaned with rubbing alcohol. It is not uncommon to have tooth sensitivity to temperature if the pink packing is lost. Please also avoid touching the surgical area, or pulling your lips away to view it. The area may swell and bruise. Any grafted area may change in appearance from day to day presenting with variety of colors ranging from red/brown to white.

Sinus Procedure

If you have had a sinus procedure, it is not uncommon to experience nose bleeds even up to one week following surgery. To avoid this, you should try not to sneeze or blow your nose forcefully. Also, do not engage in any strenuous activities which may put negative pressure in the sinus. It is also possible that grafting material may escape from the sinus into the nose (see bone graft below). Significant bruising is not uncommon under the eye or in the cheek, which may travel down the side of the neck.

Bone Graft

A bone graft or membrane may have been used for your surgery. Do not chew on the side of the graft. It is not uncommon for the bone graft particles (similar to large grains of salt) to escape from the grafted area, in which case you may experience a gritty sensation when eating.

Mouth Care

Brushing and flossing should be continued in all other areas of the mouth, but the area of surgery should be avoided in order not to dislodge the surgical sutures or any blood clots. GENTLE rinsing after meals with a glass of cool water is beneficial. Rinsing helps flush out debris that collects around the teeth. You may also have been given a prescription for a mouth rinse called Peridex (or chlorhexidine gluconate) which should be used the day after surgery and no sooner. You should rinse GENTLY for one minute at least twice a day until your next visit. You must wait 30 minutes after brushing the rest of the teeth to use the rinse because the toothpaste will deactivate the rinse, OR simply use the tooth brush without toothpaste and allow the rinse to act as your liquid toothpaste after you brush. Do not brush the surgical area. The rinse may cause a temporary, non-permanent dark staining of your teeth and tongue that disappears once you stop using the rinse. If any staining persists, we will polish your teeth for you once you are done using the rinse.

Nutrition

Maintaining an adequate diet after surgery is advisable. Cut your food into smaller pieces and chew on the opposite side of the mouth. Soft cool foods are ideal for the first 48 hours, after that, warmer foods can be consumed. Avoid hard or spicy foods until your next visit. The following foods are recommended which supply nourishment with little (if any) chewing necessary for swallowing: malted milk and shakes, yogurt, custards and puddings, apple sauce, cottage cheese, ice cream, chopped/ground meat and solids put through a blender, broth or soup (not hot for the first 48 hours), cool mashed potatoes, food supplements (Carnation instant breakfast, etc) ... and drink plenty of fluids. Do not use a straw if you have milk shakes and such – you may dislodge your blood clot by sucking too forcefully. You should also avoid carbonated beverages, and alcohol.

Smoking

Smoking is one of the most well known deterrents of healing. It increases your risk of bone loss by 6 times, and will reduce your healing rate as well as reduce the success of your surgery. You should not smoke for at least one week after surgery, and you should use a patch or some other form of nicotine replacement post-operatively if possible.

Activity

Remain quiet for 24-48 hours following surgery. Avoid heavy lifting, exercise or heavy work for the next 2-3 days after surgery as such activities increase heart rate and blood flow to the surgical area which causes further bleeding, swelling and pain. Avoid swimming for the first week to avoid infection.

Contact Us

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call us during normal business hours at:
425-374-5380

If it is after hours, you can reach Dr. Nicoara at:
206-218-7352