



Free Gingival 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 1 tablet **800mg of Ibuprofen** by mouth every 8 hours. Start the day of the 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 1/2 hour before taking any more Ibuprofen.

Narcotic Medications: Take one pain pill as soon as you can after surgery. 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.

Medrol Dose Pak: Methylprednisolone is a steroid that helps to decrease inflammation. Take as directed.

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 20 minutes at a time, twice an hour, for the first 6 hours. You can continue to apply ice to the face until the 3rd day after the surgery. If you use the ice bag as directed, you should have less swelling than you would have otherwise. The less swelling, the 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. The less swelling, the 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.



Chlorohexidine (Peridex®), an oral antiseptic: Use a Q-tip to apply it. The ear cleaning Q-tips work best, as they are very absorbent and hold a good size drop of liquid. Apply about **3 times/day** for **2 weeks** to the surgical site by dabbing the soaked in Chlorohexidine Q-Tip to the surgical area. Do *not* scrub it in. Once this liquid is applied, do not eat, drink or rinse out for 30 minutes.

Extra Soft Toothbrush (if we gave you one): This is a extra soft 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. Use this toothbrush, as directed, **starting in 2 weeks** and continue to **6 weeks**. 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 until **6 weeks** after the procedure. After that, it should be OK. Starting on the **week 2 and until week 6**, an extra soft toothbrush can be gently used around the tooth/teeth where the graft was placed. You can brush the areas not worked on. Do not floss around the tooth/teeth worked on for **2 weeks**, so you don’t accidentally take out any of the stitches. After **6 weeks**, there should be no oral hygiene restrictions.

Sutures: The sutures around the tooth/teeth grafted do not dissolve on their own. At our 2-week post-operative care visit, I will remove the sutures.

Stent: The protective stent (plastic covering) made for the roof of the mouth is for your comfort only. It is imperative that you wear the stent for the **first 3 days for 24 hours**. After 3 days, you can 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. Brush it clean and run it under cold water a few times a day.

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.



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.

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.

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.