

# Postsurgical Instructions

## Oral Soft Tissue Grafting



LOS GATOS  
ORAL & FACIAL  
SURGERY

Care of your mouth after surgery has an important effect upon healing. Swelling, discomfort, restricted jaw function, and cheek discoloration is expected, and need not cause alarm. You will look the worst on postoperative day 3 but begin to feel better.

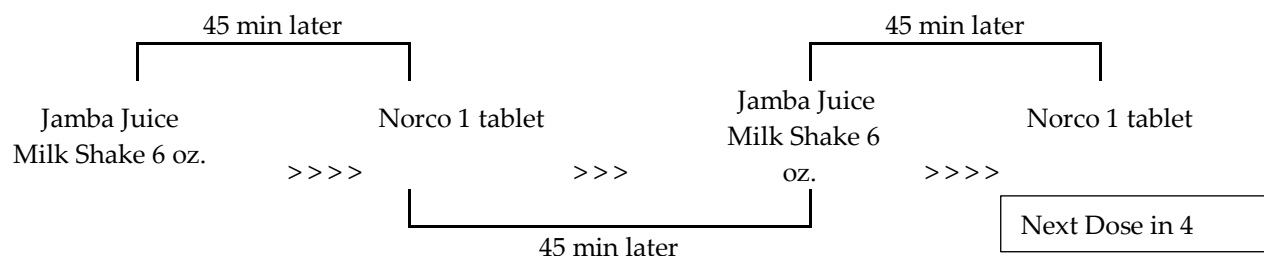
### Sequence of Events

The key to a rapid and uneventful recovery is eating food prior to taking pain medications, staying ahead of the pain with pain medication and refraining from any activity for 48 hours. The following is a recommended sequence of events. Dr. Walker may customize this sequence for your specific needs.

#### *Day of Surgery: First 4 hours*

After surgery begin drinking liquid foods (2-6 oz. no straws) to include Jamba Juice (no seeds), milk shakes or cold soups or soft foods (yogurt, apple sauce, ice cream, pudding, Jell-O) waiting 45 minutes prior to taking the first Norco (Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen) pain pill. If you are not experiencing an upset stomach, continue the sequence of alternating liquid foods and pain medication as outlined below. The goal is to take 2 Norco pain pills within the first 4 hours after surgery. The maximum Norco dose is 10 tablets in 24 hours.

#### **This Timeline Starts When You Get home**



If you experience nausea, stop taking pain medications and liquid food. This will only worsen the nausea. It is for this reason, that Dr. Walker recommends holding antibiotics until the day after surgery. Antibiotics are known to cause nausea. After waiting a period of time (1 hour) for the nausea to pass, begin to slowly restart the liquids then the pain medications. If you have waited one hour and the nausea has not passed, you can drink one ounce of a carbonated beverage (Ginger Ale). Follow this with mild tea or clear broth and soda crackers. Be careful not to chew the crackers over the surgical site as you will be numb and unable to feel these areas. If during this process you throw up, wait 45 minutes before restarting clear liquids (Ginger Ale, clear broth). Advance to more solid liquids (Jamba Juice, milk shake) slowly.

During this same period, keep ice (bags of frozen peas or corn) on your face 30 minutes on and 30 minutes off to reduce facial swelling. When you arrive home from surgery, remove the gauze. If you experience oral bleeding, place new gauze in your mouth over the surgical site to collect the blood. Swallowing blood will result in nausea. Do not sleep with gauze in your mouth. If you vomit, it is usually one time clearing blood from your stomach. When you use the bathroom, someone must accompany you so that you don't fall.

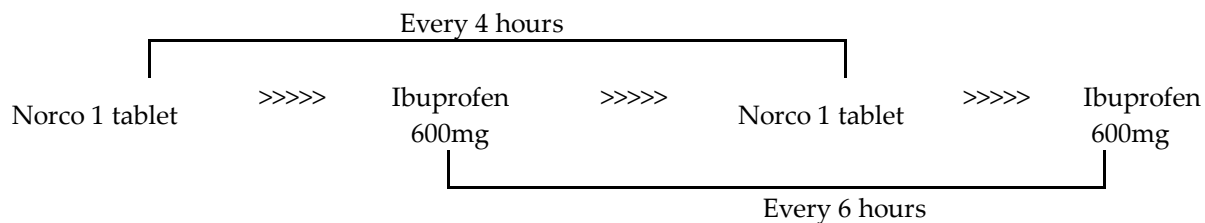
**Day of Surgery: Hour 4 to bedtime**

This is the maintenance phase of recovery. You have begun soft foods, pain medications and are not experiencing nausea. Patients often complain of little discomfort due to the local anesthesia (numb mouth). Some of the local anesthesia may last into the night and begin to disappear four hours after surgery. If you are numb the morning after surgery, notify Dr. Walker. It is important that you continue to stay ahead of the pain by taking one pain pill (Norco) every four hours until bedtime. Always take pain medication with food to prevent nausea. If you get behind on pain medication, it takes significantly more medication and time to get the pain under control. During the night, we don't recommend waking up to take pain medication. Continue ice to your face.

**Day of Surgery: Pain medications not working**

You can expect soreness at the surgical site for several days and up to one week for some people. If you follow the above protocol, it is very unusual for you to have any pain. If after taking two Norco you are still experiencing pain, begin Ibuprofen (Advil/Motrin) 600mg 4x/day. Be cautious of nausea as taking Norco with Ibuprofen significantly increases your chance of nausea and vomiting. **Do not take Tylenol** as Norco contains Tylenol and you will exceed the recommended dose.

**This Timeline Starts When Pain Meds Not Working**



**Postoperative Day 1: Day after surgery**

Nausea is very rare the day after surgery and pain medication requirements are usually significantly less. It is for this reason that Dr. Walker recommends switching from Norco to Ibuprofen and resuming your antibiotics. Begin taking Ibuprofen 600mg every 6 hours for the next 5 days. Ibuprofen will reduce soreness, pain and swelling. You can continue taking Norco for break through discomfort either with the ibuprofen or in between ibuprofen doses. Ibuprofen does not make you sleepy, but Norco does. It is important to continue to stay at home and rest. You will experience swelling worsened by physical activity. On postsurgical day 1 you can resume a normal diet; however, Dr. Walker recommends avoiding sharp foods (potato chips) as this may aggravate the surgical sites. Continuing applying ice to the face 30 minutes on and 30 minutes off to decrease swelling and pain.

**Postoperative Day 2: Second day after surgery**

Although you may awake with more swelling on the second postsurgical day, you will begin to look and feel better throughout the day. You can resume light activities but avoid strenuous physical activity. Becoming overly active on this day will delay your recovery causing more pain and swelling. Continue to advance your diet as tolerated and maintain ibuprofen for soreness. Continue to apply ice to the face to reduce facial swelling and pain. Begin exercising your jaw returning to normal opening. It will be stiff and uncomfortable to open, but once you return to normal range of motion you will feel better. Limiting jaw movement will cause more pain.

**Postoperative Day 3: Third day after surgery**

On this day you will notice a decrease in swelling and discomfort. Discontinue applying ice to your face as this will no longer reduce facial swelling and pain. Continue to advance your diet and activity but avoid strenuous physical activity. You can return to normal physical activity on the 4<sup>th</sup> day after surgery. We recommend Ibuprofen for general soreness through the 5<sup>th</sup> day after surgery.

## **Wound Healing**

Slight oral bleeding is expected up to one week after surgery. If bleeding is excessive, place a roll of sterile gauze or a dry tea bag (black tea is best) directly over the wound and bite firmly for 10 minutes with constant pressure. Do not open your mouth or talk during this time. If the gauze becomes soaked with blood, remove and replace with a new gauze. Repeat this process until bleeding stops. Chewing on the gauze or talking with gauze in your mouth will milk the site and cause continued bleeding. Spitting or using straws causes bleeding by drawing the clot from the surgical site. Avoid this if at all possible. The sutures will begin to dissolve and fall out after 3 days. Bleeding when brushing your teeth is an indication of tissue irritation. This will resolve with improved oral hygiene.

## **Surgical Dressing (Periodontal Pack)**

A surgical wound dressing (periodontal pack) may be placed over the surgical site. This is applied around the necks of the teeth and adjacent tissue to cover and protect the surgical wound. It is applied to serve as a bandage with the objective of holding the flap in place; protecting the newly formed tissue; minimizing postoperative pain and bleeding and protecting the surgical site from trauma during eating and drinking. Ideally the dressing will stay in place for a week. It will be removed at your postsurgical visit or if it becomes loose, sooner. Perioguard (Chlorhexidine gluconate) oral rinse will be provided to reduce plaque accumulation.

## **Cleaning Your Mouth and Surgical Site**

The day of surgery, do not clean the surgical site, spit or rinse your mouth as this can cause bleeding and loss of the blood clot. The day following surgery, begin using a water pick to remove bulk food debris then brush your teeth and gums not involved in surgery with a tooth brush and tooth paste. Clean the surgical site with a cotton tipped applicator (Q-Tip) dipped in diluted 3% hydrogen peroxide (½ water, ½ 3% hydrogen peroxide, no double dipping), then gentle swish of warm salt water (1/2 teaspoon of salt in a large glass of warm water) and lastly swish with Perioguard (Chlorhexidine gluconate oral rinse). Do not rinse your mouth for 30 minutes after using Perioguard. This sequence is repeated after each meal (any food products) and at bedtime. This care must be continued for at least 7 days. The oral rinses (hydrogen peroxide and warm salt water, Perioguard) are a substitute for a tooth brush and tooth paste. You can discontinue the oral rinses once you can comfortably brush the surgical site with a tooth brush and tooth paste. The cleaner you can keep your mouth and the surgical site, the better you will feel.

## **Swelling Control**

Apply an ice pack to the jaw immediately upon your return home from surgery, 30 minutes on and 30 minutes off. Continue this care for up to 2 days after surgery (a total of 3 days). Facial and oral swelling will peak on the third day after surgery and last up to 7 days. Occasionally, facial bruising will develop lasting 7-10 days. Assume a semi-upright bed position when sleeping using 2 pillows for the first 48 hours. This will reduce facial swelling. Expect more facial swelling on the side of your face that you sleep.

## **Diet**

To skip meals will add to your discomfort. Maintain a soft diet the day of surgery. Avoid hot liquids if you are numb as you may burn your mouth. Increase your fluid intake as it is easy to get behind in fluids, which causes more discomfort and delayed healing. Do not use straws for 5 days. An example of soft foods is mashed potatoes, fish, overcooked pasta, bananas, soup and yogurt. Avoid crunchy foods, acidic foods (tomato and orange juice burns), spicy foods or nuts. When comfortable, you can resume a normal diet, but avoid chewing on the surgical site. Watch for irregularity of bowel habits, which can be caused by antibiotics and the narcotic (Norco). If you develop diarrhea, stop the antibiotics and call Dr. Walker. If you develop constipation, consider discontinuing the narcotic (Norco).

## **Jaw Exercise / Stiff Jaw**

On the second day after surgery begin exercising your jaw by opening. It will be stiff and uncomfortable to open, but once you return to normal range of motion you will feel better. Limiting jaw movement will cause more pain.

## **Physical Exercise**

It is important to stay at home, rest and avoid physical activity the day of surgery and the next 2 days. You can return to school or work after the 2<sup>nd</sup> postoperative day and resume working out on the 4<sup>rd</sup> postoperative day. Don't expect to perform at optimal physical activity until the 5<sup>th</sup> postoperative day. When physically active, you may experience an increase in pain or soreness. If this occurs, discontinue that activity. This pain or soreness will not result in a compromised surgical result but could delay your recovery. Swimming is permitted after the 3<sup>rd</sup> postoperative day.

## **Travel**

It is important not to travel for the week following surgery. A change of pressure (elevators, Tahoe or airplanes) may be uncomfortable and cause oral or nasal bleeding. However, this should not cause a surgical complication.

## **Orthodontic Retainers / Night Guards / Stayplate / Essex**

You may find it uncomfortable, during the immediate post-surgical healing period, to wear any of the above appliances. It is acceptable not to wear the appliance. Wearing any of these appliances will not injure the surgical site as long as it's not putting pressure on healing tissue. If you think this is occurring, ask Dr. Walker to adjust the appliance.

## **Smokers**

It is best to cease all use of tobacco, alcohol and marijuana for 2-3 weeks prior to and after surgery. If you must smoke, do not smoke 48 hours before and after surgery. Smoking is directly related to surgical complications. It is best not to smoke at all.

## **Dry Socket**

A dry socket is loss of the blood clot from a tooth extraction site and is a frequent complication of smoking. You can prevent a dry socket by avoiding spitting for 24 hours, avoid using straws for 5 days and not smoking for the first 3 post-operative days. This complication is not seen in a soft tissue graft.

## **Allergic Reaction**

If you develop hives or a rash, discontinue all medication and immediately contact our office at 408-412-8400.

## **Telephone Support 24/7: 408-412-8400**

Should you have any questions please call our office. Surgical assistants and Dr. Walker are available to answer your questions. You are welcome to call Dr. Walker after hours. For after-hours support, call the office and follow the voice prompts to the emergency mailbox then leave your name and telephone number. The doctor will be paged and call you back. If you think something is not right, call or come in. We are here to help you.