

Postsurgical Instructions

Orthognathic Surgery at the Hospital



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: In the recovery room

After your surgery you will be in the recovery room for about 2 hours then transported to your room. The family should check in at the waiting room desk. The assistant at the waiting area desk will notify your family of your room number and when you are transported to your room. You can choose to wait in the waiting room or in the patient room. Sometimes, the floor nurse will only allow one family member to wait in the patient room.

Day of Surgery: In your room

The goal is to keep ice applied to your face, drink liquids, use pain medication to stay comfortable and rest. It is important that you continue to stay ahead of the pain by taking pain medication. One family member is permitted to stay all night in your room.

At your bedside you will have 1) IV for administration of pain medication, fluids and antibiotics. The nurse will set up a button for you to push, which will automatically deliver pain medication into your IV. 2) A plastic syringe with a rubber tip to deliver liquids to your mouth, 3) A steroid cream to keep your lips moist, 4) Afrin nasal spray to keep your nose clear for breathing, and 4) Ice packs to apply to both cheeks. If you are hungry or thirsty, you can 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). Your family can bring your favorite liquid foods to your room.

Patients often complain of little discomfort due to the local anesthesia (numb mouth). The local anesthesia may last into the night and begin to disappear four hours after surgery. The surgical procedure often results in numbness, which can last from 2 weeks to one year. Assume a semi-upright bed position when sleeping using 2 pillows for the first 48 hours. This will help reduce facial/oral swelling.

Day after Surgery: In your room

The goal is to 1) Transition off IV fluids, antibiotics and pain medications to medications by mouth, 2) Begin walking in the hallway, 3) use the bathroom and 4) walk in the hallway. Once you have accomplished these goals, you can be discharged home. When you use the bathroom or walk the hallway, someone must accompany you so that you don't fall. If you feel you have met these criteria for discharge, ask the nurse to call Dr. Walker for discharge from the hospital.

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 pain medication (Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen). 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 10-15cc of Lortab elixir (Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen).

This Timeline Starts When You Transition off IV Medication



Postoperative Day 2: At home

Nausea is very rare the second day after surgery and pain medication requirements are usually significantly less. It is for this reason that Dr. Walker recommends switching from Lortab eleixir (Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen) 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 Lortab elixir (Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen) for break through discomfort either with the Ibuprofen or in between Ibuprofen doses. Ibuprofen does not make you sleepy, but Lortab elixir (Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen) 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 soft non chewing diet. Continue to apply ice to the face 30 minutes on and 30 minutes off to decrease swelling and pain.

Postoperative Day 3: Second day at home

Although you may awake with more swelling on the third 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 through the 5th day after surgery. 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. Discontinue applying ice to your face as this will no longer reduce facial swelling and pain.

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 30 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. 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. Avoid blowing your nose for 5 days after surgery as this can cause bleeding of your nose. 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.

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 second 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 soft non chewing diet (for 6 weeks), but avoid chewing on the surgical site. Watch for irregularity of bowel habits, which can be caused by antibiotics and narcotics (Lortab elixir-Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen). If you develop diarrhea, stop the antibiotics and call Dr. Walker. If you develop constipation, consider stopping the Lortab elixir 10-15 cc (Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen). Dr. Walker will remove most of your elastics at your 1 week postsurgical visit which will allow you to use a spoon.

Elastic Therapy/Wired Shut

Dr. Walker will use mouth elastics to stabilize your jaw and provide comfort. If these elastics become uncomfortable, you can cut the elastics with a nail clipper. Removing the elastics will not change the result of your surgery. Dr. Walker will remove most of your elastics at your one week postoperative visit. In rare cases, you may need to have your jaws wired shut. These wires can only be removed by Dr. Walker and will be removed at your 6 week postoperative visit.

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.

Surgical Splint

In rare cases, Dr. Walker may use a plastic surgical splint (similar to a night guard). This is attached to your teeth at the time of surgery and removed when the jaw has healed by Dr. Walker.

Physical Exercise

It is important to stay at home, rest and avoid physical activity the day of surgery and the next 7 days. You can begin working out on the 7th postoperative day, but don't expect to perform at optimal physical activity until the 10th 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 it could delay your recovery. Swimming is permitted after the elastics are removed at the one week postoperative day.

Travel, Work or School, Facial Swelling/Bruising

It is important not to travel for 2 weeks following surgery. A change of pressure (elevators, Tahoe or airplanes) may be uncomfortable and cause oral or nasal bleeding and swelling. This should not cause a surgical complication. You will be able to return to work or school in one week. At one week, you can expect facial swelling, some face, neck and in rare cases chest bruising. If you wait two weeks before returning to work and school, most of your swelling and bruising will have resolved. At 3 months post surgical, a significant amount of swelling will be gone, but it will take up to 6 months for all the swelling to dissipate.

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 especially dry socket.

Allergic Reaction

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

Items to Have Before Surgery

Blender/Food Processor, Strainer and Thermos

Because you are on a non-chewing diet for 6 weeks, pureed foods offer more meal choices and allows you to take food to work. A Strainer helps to separate out larger food particles that would otherwise get caught in your braces. A Thermos allows you to transport your meals. Because it is inconvenient to eat, patients can loose up to 15 lbs post surgery. It is important to maintain good nutrition. This aids in your wound healing and general well being.

Water Pick

A water pick helps clean your braces and the inside of your mouth.

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.