

GINGIVAL GRAFT POSTOPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

*Please read the following instructions carefully.
They will help you to heal quickly & prevent complications.*

Activity should be kept to a minimum during the first 48 hours. Strenuous physical activity may increase swelling. Minimize **talking** and **facial expressions** that pull lips and cheeks.

Ice packs should be placed on the face, adjacent to the surgical site during the first 24 hours (15 min. on, 15 min. off) will help to minimize swelling. **Ice chips** or iced beverages held in the mouth will also help. Some **swelling** is normal and tends to peak on the 3rd day, subsiding over the next few days.

Bleeding or oozing will occur during the first 24 hours (protect your favorite pillow with an old towel). **Persistent bleeding** is usually associated with unwanted “liver” clots. These are sticky, grape jelly looking clots that cover the teeth or wound and should be wiped away with a tissue or wash cloth before applying firm pressure (a moist **tea bag** works great).

Heavy bleeding is not common but can occur, most often from the palate. **Avoid vigorous rinsing, spitting,** and the **use of a straw in the first 5-6 days.** You may find the week following surgery was uneventful then suddenly the palate erupts like a nose bleed, filling the mouth with blood. But just like the nose bleed, this frightening event can be handled with direct **pressure.** Rinse your mouth with **cold water** then, use your thumb to firmly press a wash cloth or **tea bag** against the bleeding site for at least 10 minutes. **Stay calm.** Bleeding will stop sooner if your heart rate is slower.

Medications should be taken as directed. Call the office if your discomfort is much worse than you anticipated.

Discomfort should improve after the first 12-24 hours. Pain that starts on day 3 or during the night is a common sign of **clenching or grinding.** These are destructive habits that can cause **severe pain** by irritating nerves in the wound area. The whole jaw, side of face, even the ear may ache. Wear your **night guard** if you have one. **Sleep on your back** to reduce your tendency to clench. During the day focus on keeping your teeth apart by **positioning tongue** tip on the palate behind the front teeth so the lower jaw drops slightly. Take an anti-

inflammatory such as **Aleve or Advil**. If pain persists, call the office. You may require a prescription for a **muscle relaxer**.

Bruising may occur a few days following surgery and can take 7-10 days to fade away. Avoid **blood thinning** drugs, vitamins, and supplements prior to surgery. Use **ice** during the first 24 hours following surgery. Use the homeopathic remedy **Arnica 200C** every 4 hours starting the day before surgery for 3-5 days. **Have some fun** and make up a good story about how you got the bruise.

Eat what feels comfortable. During the first day **cold food** will help to reduce bleeding, warm food is alright but hot food or beverages will dilate blood vessels so avoid them. **Foods to consider:** smoothies or milk shakes (no straw), yogurt, eggs, pastas, mashed potatoes, warm chicken soup, and plenty of liquids. Stay away from small seeds and acidic foods.

Palatal Numbness may occur along the donor site on the palate. Normal sensation usually returns in a few weeks or months. Occasionally patients describe a small patch of skin on the palate that feels “shiny” or altered for longer than a year. This will not impact function or speech.

Palatal stent is the thin plastic cover provided to minimize bleeding by compressing the donor site. It also protects the palate during eating, and it prevents your tongue from playing with the palatal sutures. For best healing, wear the stent **during the first 5 days**, (longer if you would like). The palate heals faster with it in. Remember the **stent is for your comfort** so if it becomes uncomfortable or annoying, it may be removed and the palate will still heal. Remove and clean your stent frequently.

Oral Hygiene is initially accomplished using the ultra soft tooth brush, taking care to avoid touching the grafts during the first 10 days. Use the **Chlorhexidine** mouth rinse twice daily by dabbing the surgical sites with a cotton swab or rinsing with a small cap full for 60 seconds. Brush and floss the uninvolved teeth. Ask your surgical nurse before resuming electric brushing.

Smoking retards wound healing and reduces tissue coverage over roots. Avoid smoking for at least 6 weeks. If quitting is out of the question, limit yourself to less than ½ a pack per day.

Sutures on the palate and around some of the teeth are dissolvable so they will fall out between days 3-7. The tiny sutures around the graft are usually not dissolvable so they will be removed at your follow up visit. These sutures are often looped around the teeth so you may feel them with your tongue.

Reach Dr. Roberts after hours at **(760) 815-7386**