

## One Week Post-Operative Instructions for Corrective Jaw Surgery

After you have undergone a surgical procedure to correct the position of your upper jaw, lower jaw, or both, attention must be given to several aspects of postoperative care in order to help make the recovery as quick and easy as possible. Since surgery produces soreness in the muscles and bones of the jaw as well as the lips, nose and other areas of the face, some difficulty is encountered in performing such tasks as eating, drinking and cleaning your teeth. However, each of these things must be done continuously and carefully to avoid postoperative problems. This is a list of instructions which should help you in your postoperative recovery.

### DIET

You can now begin to progress your diet to a soft, non-chew diet. Remember, the plates and screws used to secure the jaw(s) in their new position take 6 weeks to stabilize, and thus your diet will need to progress slowly. Using a baby spoon can be helpful as it will still be difficult to open your mouth.

Examples of food that is safe to consume are:

- Mashed potatoes
- Applesauce
- Oatmeal and pudding
- Very soft scrambled eggs or pancakes
- Any liquids
- Any pureed food

### PAIN MANAGEMENT

At this stage most patients are beginning to reduce the amount of pain medication they require as their post-operative discomfort naturally decreases. As your discomfort decreases, you should start tapering off of the oxycodone, while maintaining the Tylenol and Ibuprofen usage if necessary. Once you are no longer taking oxycodone you can slowly decrease the amount of Tylenol and Ibuprofen, by progressively taking one less pill at each 6-hour dosing interval. It is normal for patients to need some Tylenol and Ibuprofen for up to 3-4 weeks after surgery. As long as you are staying hydrated, continuing to use the Tylenol and Ibuprofen 4 times per day is completely safe. If you still needing the maximum dose of Tylenol and Ibuprofen 4 weeks after surgery, please let your surgeon know.

### ORAL HYGIENE

Maintaining proper oral hygiene can be extremely difficult post-operatively, but it is incredibly important to help prevent an infection from developing. We recommend purchasing a *baby toothbrush* as the smaller size and soft bristles will make it easier to keep your braces and teeth clean. It is important you brush your teeth at least twice a day, taking care to clean **the front of your teeth and**

**braces only** (do not clean the gums because your surgical incisions are in that area). You may also continue to use the antibacterial mouth rinse (Chlorhexidine) which can help supplement for tooth brushing until you are able to adequately brush your teeth. **It is now safe to use a water pik or electric toothbrush if desired.**

### SWELLING REDUCTION STRATEGY

At this stage the swelling should stop accumulating and start decreasing. Most of the swelling will decrease over the next 2 weeks, but the remainder of the subtle swelling can take up to 6 months. In order to encourage the swelling to dissipate more quickly:

- Apply moist heat to promote drainage of swelling which has accumulated during initial healing phase. (e.g. clay heat packs sold in drug store, moist towel heated in microwave)
- Continuing to elevate your head while sleeping and resting by using several pillows such that your head is above your heart. This will improve swelling draining from the face.

### ELASTICS (RUBBER BANDS)

Post-operative elastics are crucial to help establish and stabilize your new bite. It is normal that the elastics will limit your jaw movement; this is intentional. We will evaluate your bite and advise on the quantity of elastics to use and length of time and provide you with an elastic diagram.

### PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

**Other than a light walk, there should be no cardio or weight lifting exercises at this time.** Jogging can begin 3 weeks after surgery, but heavy lifting and any contact sports cannot start until 6 weeks after surgery. Begin by going shorter distances and at a slower pace than usual to be sure you feel up to the exercise. As your endurance and confidence improve, gradually increase the level of exercise within a level of comfort.

### JAW EXERCISES

**Do not attempt to specifically stretch your jaw at this time, passive opening is ok for eating and hygiene.** It is normal to have a restricted motion and for your muscles and bones to be stiff and sore. Jaw exercises will be introduced later in your recovery period.

As you can see, recovery from surgery requires a lot of effort on your part. We will be happy to answer any questions regarding diet, hygiene, elastics, exercise, or any other problem which may be of concern to you. Remember, postsurgical progress is sometimes uncomfortable and may occur slowly. However, with some determination and attention to these instructions, you can maximize your healing process. If you have any questions regarding your postoperative recovery, please do not hesitate to call us anytime at (650) 342 – 0213.