

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

### DIET

You can continue to progress your diet but maintain a soft, non-chew diet. **You can eat anything you would like that does not require you to place food between your teeth and bite.** 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:

- Any liquids
- Any pureed food
- Soft, overcooked pasta
- Soft chicken cut or shredded into very small pieces, that can be swallowed without chewing
- Soft flaky fish
- Very soft ground meat cut into small pieces, that can be swallowed without chewing
- **Do not eat anything that requires you to mash it by placing food between your teeth, no pressure should be placed on the teeth during eating.**

### PAIN MANAGEMENT

At this stage most patients are no longer using any oxycodone, but may still be tapering off from the Tylenol and Ibuprofen. 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. Once you are able to open your mouth and adequately brush your teeth to keep your mouth clean you can stop using the antibacterial mouth since (Chlorhexidine). Continue to refrain from brushing where the incisions were made, just brush the teeth. **It is now safe to use a water pik or electric toothbrush if desired.**

### SWELLING REDUCTION STRATEGY

At this stage ~ 50% of the swelling should have resolved. The remainder of the swelling will continue to dissipate slowly but can take up to 6 months before it is completely gone. Continuing to elevate your head while sleeping and beginning the jaw stretching exercises will continue to encourage the swelling to resolve.

## 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.

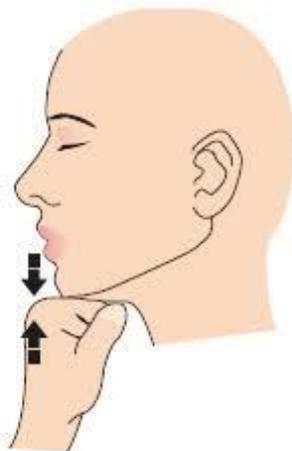
## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

**It is now safe to begin light cardio activity.** Stationary bike, brisk walking, or jogging can begin. However, heavy lifting or contact sports need to wait until at least 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

It is now safe to begin **passive jaw exercises**. Attempt to gradually increase the amount you can open your mouth by simply using normal jaw muscles. Some mild discomfort might be experienced but keep this within a level that is easily tolerated for a short period of time. About 5 minutes of concentrated jaw movement in the morning, during the middle of the day, and again at night should be sufficient. By the fourth week after surgery you should be able to easily get one finger between your front teeth (10-15mm opening). By the fifth week you should be able to get two fingers between your teeth (20-25mm).

If you do not achieve this goal, begin “Hold and Relax” exercises. This involves opening your mouth about one half the amount you comfortably can. Fold your hand into a fist and place your fist under your lower jaw. Using gentle pressure with your hand try to push your mouth closed, use your jaw muscles to resist the pressure from your hand. Hold this pressure for five seconds. Release and spend 30-60 seconds moving your jaw side to side and try to passively stretch and open your mouth without resistance. Then repeat the hold and relax exercise. Do five repetitions of this exercise three times per day.



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.