Vandervoort
FAMILY DENTISTRY

Post-Operative Instructions for Dental Implants

The initial healing period after a dental implant is 1-2 weeks, and you will likely experience some swelling and pain during this period. If you notice any signs of infection (fever, redness, pus, large swellings which start 2-3 days after surgery), contact our office. Before the procedure, you were given an anesthetic to ensure your comfort. This anesthetic typically leaves your lips, teeth and tongue feeling numb. For this reason, **avoid chewing until the numbness has completely worn off.** Please do not disturb the wound. Avoid spitting or touching the wound on the day of surgery. In many cases there will be a metal healing abutment protruding through the gingival (gum) tissue.

Pain: You should begin taking pain medication before you feel the local anesthetic wearing off. For mild to moderate pain, 1 or 2 Extra Strength Tylenol (500mg) tablets may be taken every 4 hours. Ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) is an anti-inflammatory and may be taken as well. Ibuprofen bought over the counter comes in 200mg tablets and may be taken in the following doses: two 200mg tablets may be taken every 4 hours, three 200mg tablets may be taken every 6 hours, or four 200mg tablets may be taken every 8 hours. **Research indicates that one of the most effective post-operative pain control regimens is rotating 500-1000 mg Tylenol and 400-800 mg Ibuprofen every 4 hours.** For severe pain, prescribed pain medication should be taken as directed. Do not take any of the above medication if you are allergic or have been instructed by your doctor not to take it. Many post-operative pain medications such as Norco, Lortab, and Percocet contain narcotics. These medications can make you dizzy, sleepy, and impair coordination and judgment. If you are taking narcotic pain medication, you should remain at home. Do not operate complex equipment (such as a lawn mower), drive a car, or make important decisions while taking narcotic pain medication. Nausea is also common if medications are taken on a completely empty stomach, so try to take medications with a snack or meal. If any other side effects occur, be sure to reread the instructions and warnings on the medication, and call our office if questions arise.

Bleeding: Some bleeding or redness in the saliva is normal during the first day or two after surgery. Excessive bleeding (your mouth fills up rapidly with blood) can be controlled by biting on a moistened gauze pad placed directly on the bleeding wound for 30-60 minutes. **If bleeding continues, create firm, direct pressure by biting on a moistened tea bag placed over the surgical site for 30-60 minutes**. Tea contains tannic acid, which is an astringent. Direct pressure and the tannic acid will constrict blood vessels and help to stop bleeding. If active bleeding persists, please call our office for further instructions.

Antibiotics: Antibiotics are NOT necessary for all implant procedures. **If an antibiotic has been prescribed, be sure to take the full course of antibiotics as directed to help prevent infection.**

Swelling: Swelling and bruising is a normal occurrence after surgery. Immediate application of ice to the face near the area of surgery will help to minimize swelling and bruising. Use an ice pack or sealed plastic bag filled with ice wrapped in a thin towel as much as possible during the first 12-24 hours after surgery while awake. **Rotate placing the ice on the surgical area for 15 minutes on and 15 minutes off.** Ice is helpful only during the first 72 hours after surgery.

Diet: Because nourishment is important to the healing process, eat once the numbness has worn off. Drink plenty of fluids. Avoid hot liquids and hot food on the day of surgery. Liquids and soft food should be consumed on the day of surgery. Return to a normal diet as soon as possible unless otherwise directed. Please avoid chewing on the area where the implant(s) was placed. Creating pressure or chewing on the implant site(s) during the three to six-month healing period can interfere with implant healing, compromising the outcome or resulting in implant failure.

Oral Hygiene: Good oral hygiene is essential for good healing. The night of surgery, use the prescribed PerioGard (Chlorhexidine) oral rinse before bed if there is no active bleeding. The day after surgery Periogard should be used twice daily after breakfast and before going to bed at night; rinse for at least 60 seconds then spit out after brushing. Please see the label on the bottle for full instructions. **Warm saltwater rinses (1/2 teaspoon of salt one cup of warm water) should be used at least 2-3 times a day, especially after meals.** Keeping your mouth clean by brushing and flossing your teeth is important. Start brushing your teeth on the evening of surgery or the first day after surgery. Be very gentle with brushing and flossing near the surgical site(s). You can gently clean around the implant surgical site with a damp Q-tip.

Activity: It is generally best to avoid exercise or strenuous exertion until pain and swelling resolves. If you experience throbbing or aching at the surgical site(s) while exercising, you should discontinue exercising, wait a day or two, then try again. Keep in mind that you are probably not taking normal nourishment; this may weaken you and further limit your ability to exercise. Short naps in bed during the day are acceptable. Lying in bed for a prolonged period of time during the day is not healthy, it will only slow recovery and enhance fatigue. You will feel stronger and better faster if you get your body moving.

Smoking and alcohol increases the risk for implant failure: Please discontinue smoking if at all possible. Try to avoid smoking for at least the first two weeks after surgery. Excessive drinking of alcoholic beverages can also interfere with implant healing. Please avoid drinking alcoholic beverages for the first week after surgery.

Healing Abutments/Temporaries: If there is a healing abutment or temporary crown on the implant, it must be kept clean. Once the tissues are sufficiently healed (usually in 10-14 days), the metal healing abutment or crown should be brushed with a soft bristle tooth brush and tooth paste gently but thoroughly two to three times a day just like a tooth. Until that time it must be kept clean with PerioGard, saltwater rinses, and gentle cleaning with a damp Q-tip.

Wearing Your Prosthesis: We understand how important it is for our patients to be able to wear their temporary teeth as soon as possible after surgery. All removable appliances including partial dentures, flippers and full dentures must be checked for proper fit before they are worn. These appliances can transmit pressure to the implant site(s), which can interfere with implant(s) healing and result in implant failure. In some cases it may be necessary to go without wearing the temporary teeth for a few days until swelling resolves and healing takes place. In most cases, partial-dentures, flippers, or full dentures should be used only for cosmetic purposes, not for chewing. They should be worn only in public when required and removed in the privacy of your own home.

When To Return: Generally, we schedule appointments 2-3 weeks after surgery to have your sutures removed and evaluate healing. The implant(s) will heal for 3-6 months before proceeding to the final restoration(s). It is our desire that your recovery be as smooth and pleasant as possible. If you have questions about your progress, please call our office.