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POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS: SOFT TISSUE (GINGIVAL) GRAFT

Patient Name: _____ Date: _____

Bleeding Control

- Bite firmly on the gauze pad placed over the surgical area for 30-45 minutes; replace with fresh gauze and repeat if needed
- Some oozing or blood-tinged saliva for the first 24 hours is normal
- Avoid vigorous rinsing, spitting, or sucking motions (e.g., straws) for at least 24 hours, as this can dislodge the blood clot
- A dressing or periodontal packing (not a stent) will be placed over the donor site on the roof of your mouth (palate), if used, to protect it and help control bleeding
- It is normal for this dressing/packing to loosen and fall off on its own after a few days — do not attempt to replace it yourself if it comes off
- If the palate donor site bleeds after the dressing comes off, wrap a moist black tea bag in gauze and apply firm, steady pressure against the area for 15-20 minutes. The tannic acid in black tea helps promote clotting. Call our office if bleeding does not stop or recurs.

Swelling & Discomfort

- Apply an ice pack to the outside of the face over the surgical area for 15-20 minutes on, 15-20 minutes off, for the first 24-48 hours
- Some swelling and bruising is normal and typically peaks on day 2-3 before improving
- Take pain medication as prescribed/directed, starting before the local anesthetic wears off if possible
- Sleep with your head slightly elevated on pillows for the first few nights to help reduce swelling

Diet

- Cold, soft foods for the first 24-48 hours (ice cream, smoothies, yogurt, applesauce) can be especially soothing
- Avoid spicy, acidic, salty, or crunchy foods that can irritate the donor and recipient sites for 1-2 weeks
- Chew away from the surgical area(s)

Oral Hygiene

- Do not brush or floss directly at the graft site or donor site (roof of mouth, if used) until instructed at your follow-up
- Begin gentle warm salt-water rinses the day after surgery, or as instructed
- Continue normal hygiene on all other areas of the mouth

Activity

- Rest and avoid strenuous activity or exercise for at least 2-3 days
- Avoid bending over or heavy lifting, which increases blood flow to the head and can increase bleeding/swelling
- You may return to light normal activity as comfort allows

Medications

- Take all prescribed antibiotics exactly as directed, for the full course, even if you feel fine

- Take pain medication as directed; do not exceed the labeled or prescribed dose
- If prescribed a mouth rinse, begin use as directed, typically starting the day after surgery
- Continue your regular medications as normal unless otherwise instructed

Please Avoid

- Smoking or vaping (significantly impairs healing and increases risk of graft failure)
- Alcohol for at least 24 hours or while taking prescribed pain medication
- Spitting, using straws, or vigorous rinsing for the first 24 hours
- Touching, poking, or disturbing the surgical area with your tongue, fingers, or a toothbrush
- Do not lift your lip or cheek to look at the surgical site, as this can stretch and disrupt the graft
- Avoid wearing a removable retainer or denture over the area unless instructed otherwise

Special Instructions for Your Donor/Graft Site

- If tissue was taken from the roof of your mouth (palate), that area may feel like a 'pizza burn' — this is normal and improves over 1-2 weeks

When to Call Our Office

Please call us right away if you experience any of the following:

- Bleeding that does not slow down after 3-4 hours of firm gauze pressure
- Pain that is severe or worsening rather than improving after the first 2-3 days
- Swelling that increases significantly after day 3, or is accompanied by fever
- Fever over 101°F (38.3°C)
- Pus, foul taste/odor, or drainage from the surgical site
- Numbness of the lip, chin, or tongue that has not begun to improve after several days
- Any signs of an allergic reaction (rash, itching, difficulty breathing or swallowing) — seek emergency care immediately

Office phone: 203-446-3890 After-hours/emergency line: 203-446-3890

Follow-Up

Please keep your scheduled follow-up appointment so we can check your healing progress. Call our office if you need to schedule or reschedule this visit.