Care After Upper and/or Lower Jaw Surgery

Congratulations on your jaw surgery! It is important to take care of yourself so you can have a better recovery. In this handout, you will learn how to care for your jaw and mouth as you recover from surgery.

PAIN AND SWELLING

Pain and swelling are normal after jaw surgery. Pain and swelling are usually strongest for 2-3 days after surgery. Here are some do’s and don’ts for pain and swelling:

Do

- Use non-narcotic pain relief first. This includes over-the-counter medications and ice packs.
- Only use narcotic pain medications if the non-narcotic ways do not work. Eat something before you take a narcotic medication. Narcotics can cause upset stomach and vomiting.
- If you feel constipated (cannot have a bowel movement) while taking narcotics, take an over-the-counter stool softener or laxative.
- Use ice packs on your jaw for the first 2-3 days after surgery. Use ice packs for 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off on each side of your face.
- Sleep on your back in an almost upright position on 2 pillows placed on top of each other.

Do Not

- Do not drive if you take narcotic medications. Narcotics can make you feel sleepy.
- Do not take narcotics on an empty stomach. Eat something before you take a narcotic medication.

TAKING CARE OF YOUR TEETH AND GUMS

Taking care of your teeth and gums is very important after jaw surgery. This includes brushing your teeth and using mouthwash. This can help prevent infections, cavities and gum disease. Here are tips for taking care of your teeth and gums:

- Brush your teeth 3 times a day. Brush after breakfast and before bed. You can use a regular or electronic toothbrush.
- Rinse your mouth with Peridex® (chlorhexidine) twice a day. Rinse twice (2 times) a day. Do not eat or drink for half an hour (30 minutes) after rinsing with Peridex®.
- Rinse your mouth with warm salt water after you eat and for a total of 4 times a day. If you rinse with Peridex® first, wait 1 hour before rinsing with warm salt water.

UPSET STOMACH AND VOMITING

It is normal to have an upset stomach or to vomit after surgery. This happens if you swallow a little blood during or after your surgery. Here are some tips to relieve an upset stomach:

- Drink small amounts of soda every 5-6 hours. The bubbles in soda can help settle your stomach. Ginger ale, Sprite® and 7-Up® can relieve upset stomach.
- If you have an upset stomach for more than a few days, call Pediatric Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery (OMFS) at 617-726-2740. We can help you find ways to feel better.
ANTIBIOTICS
Antibiotics prevent or treat infections. Not everyone needs an antibiotic, but it is important to take it if your doctor prescribed one. Here are some do’s and don’ts on taking antibiotics:

- Take every pill on the right day until you finish the pack.
- Call the doctor if you have a bad reaction to the antibiotic.
- Do not stop taking the antibiotic unless your doctor tells you to.

FOOD AND DRINK
Staying on a liquid or “blenderized” diet for 6 weeks after surgery is very important for your recovery. You cannot chew food or gum for 6 weeks. Here are some do’s and don’ts about food and drink while you recover:

Do
- Put any food that is harder than applesauce in the blender before you eat it. You can put almost any food in a blender. This way, you can enjoy your favorite foods while letting your jaw heal.
- Add dietary supplements (extra nutrition) if your doctor tells you to. This includes nutritional drinks like Carnation® Instant Breakfast shakes and Ensure®.
- Follow your doctor’s instructions for wearing your elastics.

Do Not
- Do not eat low-fat or fat-free foods for 6 weeks after surgery. It is important that you eat all of the calories and nutrients you can. This can help you heal and keep you fuller for longer.

ACTIVITY
Taking it easy is important for your recovery. Here are some tips for activity as you recover:

- Do not take part in activities that cause trauma (injury) to your face for at least 6 weeks.
- Do not run, lift weights or play contact sports. This includes any sport where you tackle, jump or hit another person.

SHOWERING AND BATHING
- Shower or take a bath every day. Wash your wound twice (2 times) a day.
- Do not peel off the Dermabond® over your incision. It will flake off on its own.

Who can I call with questions or concerns?
If there is an emergency, go to your closest emergency room. If there is no emergency, call:

- Pediatric OMFS at 617-726-2740
- MassGeneral Hospital for Children 617-726-2000

Ask for the oral surgeon on call. An oral surgeon can talk with you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Your follow-up appointment
Schedule a follow-up appointment in Pediatric OMFS with ____________________________.
To schedule your appointment, call Pediatric OMFS at 617-726-2740.

For more information please call
617-726-2740

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