

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR FREE GINGIVAL GRAFTING

A free gingival graft serves a few purposes. Its primary purpose is to increase the thick, pink immobile gum tissue that protects the tooth and its supporting bone. It also can cover up exposed root surfaces that are prone to decay and sensitivity, as well as remove any muscle pulls that may make a tooth prone to further recession.

In addition to our general post-operative instructions, please note the following instructions specific to your graft:

MINIMIZE MOVEMENT

The biggest key to the graft “taking” is to keep the graft as immobilized as possible. Pulling down your lip to look at the graft, playing with it with your tongue, or rubbing the outside of your lip near the site can move the graft and impede healing or even cause graft failure. In addition, avoiding any unintentional trauma to the site is important – if you have a playful pet that jumps up or a child that likes to roughhouse, be cautious to not take a bump to the face.

PERIODONTAL DRESSING

A periodontal dressing may have been applied to the site that looks like silly putty or chewing gum stuck to the teeth. It is meant to protect the site and apply gentle pressure to keep the graft still. This may fall out on its own 5 days after the surgery – if it does fall out do not be alarmed and do not try to put it back in. If the dressing is still in place at your one-week post-operative visit, we will remove it.

PALATAL PROTECTOR

A palatal protector will be made for your comfort either before your surgery or the day of your surgery. It is intended to protect the donor site of the graft and prevent discomfort and bleeding. Please remember the following:

1. Leave the palatal protector in for 48 hours without taking it out to prevent bleeding
2. After 48 hours, you can wear the palatal protector as much as you would like, but it is good to remove it daily and clean it under cold water. We recommend wearing it while you eat in order to prevent food from injuring the site, but sometimes this can be difficult.

BLEEDING

The donor site on the palate has many blood vessels and can be a potential bleeding risk. Some oozing is normal but if constant bleeding persists, please do the following:

1. Remove the palatal protector and gently clean the roof of the mouth with some moistened gauze and locate the donor site. This typically is on the “slope” of the palate and is roughly the size of a postage stamp or two.
2. Take a moistened tea bag (inexpensive black tea works just fine – green tea does not work well) and apply firm, direct pressure with it using your thumb directly over the site for approximately 45 minutes. Initially this can sting but it will subside quickly.
3. Rinse off the palatal protector in cool water and replace it gently.
4. If you still have persistent bleeding, please contact our office during business hours or doctor’s cell phone after hours.

APPEARANCE

The graft can have a “wet scab” appearance that can appear whitish in color. Do not let this alarm you as it is normal healing! Over time the graft will become more pink, less “bumpy” and firmer. This type of graft only gets better with time!

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