

Additional Patient Instructions Following Soft Tissue Grafting Surgery

These instructions are to be used in addition to the general surgical post-operative instructions given to you by Dr. Temlock and his staff. It is imperative that you closely follow all instructions to maximize your surgical results and minimize risks. These are intended to promote healing and minimize discomfort following your gum tissue surgery.

1. **Do not look at the surgical area:** The grafted area and stitches are extremely fragile and any stretching of the lips, cheeks, or surgical area can cause the graft and/or stitches to fail. The grafted area will go through several color changes before maturing into normal looking gum tissue. Please do not look at the grafted area at all. Dr. Temlock will show you the results at each follow-up appointment when it is safe to manipulate these areas in a controlled manner.

2. **Do not brush or floss the area where the graft was placed until Dr. Temlock instructs you to do so:** In fact, you should avoid brushing and flossing a tooth in front and behind of the surgical area. Brushing can prematurely traumatize the graft and stitches leading to failure. To clean these areas, gently rinse with the mouth rinse prescribed. Dr. Temlock will evaluate the maturity of the tissues at your upcoming appointments and notify you when it is safe to resume normal hygiene.

3. **Do not massage/manipulate the outside of the face near the surgical site:** You may place ice packs on the outside of the face to help alleviate initial swelling. When swelling occurs, let your body reduce the swelling naturally over the next several days. Do not push or massage the swollen area.

4. **Do not take out stitches yourself:** The stitches placed in your mouth are serving a critical function, and they should not be removed even if they are bothering you. Your stitches will most likely begin to dissolve in approximately 3 weeks, but it is imperative to not pull on loose stitches or cut stitches placed in the surgical area. If your stitches become so bothersome that you would like them removed, please call the office to set up an appointment so someone can remove them safely.

5. **Wear your customized palatal stent/guard for at least 72 hours:** This protective soft tray was fabricated specifically for your comfort and safety. If you need to clean the device, gently remove it from your mouth, rinse it with cold water, and immediately replace the device. You can eat and sleep with this device in your mouth. The stent does tend to stain if you eat colorful foods (red pasta sauce, soy sauce, yellow curry, etc), so do not be alarmed if it begins to change colors. After 72 hours, it is your choice if you continue to wear the device based on comfort, eating habits, and palatal swelling.

6. **Dressing or bandage applied to the palate:** Do not disturb the dressing. If pieces break off, don't worry. The dressing/bandage is temporary and tends to break down over several days following surgery. Sometimes the bandage will attach itself to food while eating and gradually pull away. If you start to bleed when removed, do not panic! Simply apply pressure to the area for 15 minutes and the bleeding should subside. Repeat if necessary. Refer to the instruction section regarding bleeding.

7. **Expect swelling and bruising:** Your body will go through several stages of healing before the graft is secure and safe. One of the body's first reactions in the healing process is to promote localized swelling. *Swelling gradually increases for the first 4-6 days and then gradually tapers away.* The onset and dissipation of swelling is not instantaneous and will take time.

8. **Use common sense:** You just had a surgical procedure and your body needs time to heal. Do not over-exert yourself through exercise or working too hard prematurely. Minimize talking for a few days. Elevate your head when you sleep. If you are eating foods that cause discomfort or bleeding, simply eat something else. If you are doing an activity that causes discomfort or bleeding, stop that activity. Do not fly for at least 5 days after surgery. Accordingly, plan ahead of time and be prepared!

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS, PLEASE CALL THE OFFICE WHERE YOUR PROCEDURE WAS COMPLETED OR LEAVE A MESSAGE FOR DR. TEMLOCK AT (415) 787-3151. HE WILL RETURN YOUR MESSAGE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. THIS NUMBER DOES NOT ACCEPT TEXT MESSAGES

IF YOU ARE IN NEED OF URGENT, IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION AND DR. TEMLOCK IS UNAVAILABLE, GO DIRECTLY TO YOUR LOCAL EMERGENCY ROOM