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Implant surgery post-operative care

Your recovery from oral surgery will be influenced by a number of factors. These factors can influence the level of pain or discomfort, the amount of swelling, the amount of bleeding or possible bruising, and the functional limitations you can expect following surgery.

The **type and difficulty of surgery** are probably the most significant factors influencing patient recovery. Other factors include: **patient age and general health, pre and postoperative oral hygiene, patient nutrition, and the presence or development of infection.**

These instructions are intended to help you with recovery from dental implant surgery. Please take time to read them carefully. Not all instructions may apply to you. You will have instructions with emphasis on matters that pertain to your specific care reviewed prior to discharge by a member of our staff.

In the event you experience problems or have questions that are not discussed here, please call Dr. Cary at one of the above listed telephone numbers for advice or to arrange a visit in the office.

Activity

Rest is generally recommended following surgery of any kind. Your head should remain elevated at all times for the first 48 hours, even while sleeping. This will minimize the amount of bleeding, swelling, and pain you experience. Once bleeding has stopped, activity may then resume for those patients having minor surgical procedures. Resting for the entire day is essential for those patients having more involved procedures, or for those who have had intravenous sedation or general anesthesia. We recommend you have no commitments to work, school, or important events for a period of 2-7 days following more involved procedures. Strenuous exercise should be avoided until you have completely recovered from surgery. If you will be expected to be out of work or school for an extended time, a doctor's excuse will be provided upon request.

Bleeding

A variable amount of bleeding is to be expected after surgery. Applying pressure to the bleeding sites with gauze packs will control and stop the bleeding. Use two or three gauze squares folded into a tight bundle to create the pack. Make certain the gauze packs are placed directly over the site of bleeding. Bite firmly on the packs at least 20 to 30 minutes at a time. At the end of that time you should remove the packs and inspect for bleeding. Replace with fresh gauze packs and resume biting pressure if bleeding is still present. Biting pressure should only be stopped when all visible bleeding has stopped. Packs will often appear faint red or brownish when bleeding has stopped. Do not sleep with gauze packs in your mouth.

All patients who have been under anesthesia for surgery should have another person change the gauze packs to assure that they are in proper position. You can "recycle" your gauze by rinsing them out in cold water and squeezing them dry again. You can also use a moistened teabag placed in the same fashion as the gauze packs.

Some intermittent oozing of blood may be seen for a period of one to three days. This is normal. Be very careful when eating and toothbrushing for the first two weeks following surgery to avoid further bleeding.

Swelling

Ice packs to the jaw/face for 35-45 mins. each hour for the first 24 hours is ESSENTIAL if you wish to minimize facial/jaw swelling. Keep your head elevated (even while sleeping) during the first 48 hours.

When swelling does occur, it is usually associated with jaw stiffness. Swelling will begin to resolve on the 3rd to 4th day after surgery, and is generally gone completely by the end of the first week post-op. ***If swelling returns after having gone away initially, you should contact the office, as this may indicate the development of infection.*** Jaw stiffness will often take longer than swelling to resolve, sometimes taking up to two weeks to completely go away.

Pain

Pain is variable following dental implant surgery. In many cases pain will be mild, and is best managed with non-prescription medications. Aspirin, acetaminophen, ibuprofen, or naproxen may be recommended. A prescription will be provided, or you may have prescription strength medications dispensed from our office, if the need for stronger medication is anticipated.

Take your pain medication before the sensation of "numbness" wears off completely, and thereafter as directed until you are comfortable without medication. You may find a mild pain reliever is needed for up to a week following the resolution of your initial surgical pain.

Expect the first 3 to 5 hours following the return of sensation to be your most uncomfortable time. You may require a combination of pain medications during the first 24 hours. Alternating your prescription medication with aspirin, tylenol, or ibuprofen may be suggested to control more severe pain. Placing ice over the affected area will also be helpful.

Oral Hygiene

Do not rinse vigorously, spit, or use commercial mouthwash on the day of surgery. Using a toothbrush on the first day around the surgical sites is generally not advised. These things are likely to cause additional bleeding. Resume normal mouth cleaning techniques on the day following surgery. This will have to be done very gently to avoid pain or early loss of stitches. Warm salt water solution (1/4 teas. salt in 10 oz. water) rinses should be done 4 to 6 times a day for the first 3 to 5 days, starting the day after surgery.

An irrigation syringe may be given to you to use to rinse the surgical area directly. This should only be used after the first 24 hours so as not to disrupt a blood clot and to avoid additional bleeding. The warm salt water solution (mixed as above) should be used. Food debris can be kept out of the area with this device. You may find it useful for several weeks. A Q-tip can be used to gently clean any exposed implant surfaces.

Nausea

Nausea is not uncommon in the first 24 hours following oral surgery. The most common causes are the presence of swallowed blood in the stomach, or sensitivity to pain medication. Thus, it is important to stop any bleeding as quickly as possible, and to avoid narcotic pain medication (which more often cause nausea compared with acetaminophen or ibuprofen) as much as possible.

Avoiding unnecessary movement and sipping carbonated liquids seems to help in most cases. You may be provided with nausea medication (rectal suppository) to be used as directed. You will probably vomit if blood is in your stomach. This also tends to relieve the nausea. Stay on clear liquids until the nausea has stopped.

If nausea is related to taking pain medication, stop taking the medication. If you cannot get pain control with tylenol, aspirin, or ibuprofen, another pain reliever will be prescribed.

Diet

The type and complexity of your surgery will influence your diet postoperatively. In some cases, a normal diet can be resumed the day of surgery. Dietary restrictions may be advised to promote better healing. Generally a liquid or soft diet will be advised for the day of surgery. You may progress to a regular diet as tolerated. Avoid foods that are uncomfortable to chew. Avoid chewing where the implant or implants have been placed.

Clear liquids (fruit juice, soda, broth, jello) seem to settle best with patients who have had sedation/general anesthesia. Drink plenty of liquids while you are not eating solid food. Liquid diet supplements may be advised if a regular diet be resumed within 3 to 4 days post-op.

Dental Appliances

You may have been provided with a temporary denture prosthesis for use while the dental implant(s) are integrating. This is most often the case when anterior or esthetically important teeth are being replaced. In some cases the appliance can be worn immediately following implant surgery. In other cases it is difficult to wear such an appliance due to local tissue swelling or tenderness immediately following surgery. You will be advised regarding the use of such an appliance at the time of surgery.

It is recommended that the denture appliance be left out of the mouth until it can be worn with reasonable comfort and does not impinge upon the surgical site.

The use of a denture appliance that is poorly fitting or impinges on the surgical site can have extremely negative effects on the success of implant surgery and the ultimate functional or esthetic outcome of care. If in doubt, leave it out.

Post-op appointment

A post -op appointment may be made for you so that we can evaluate your healing remove any remaining stitches. This is a quick and normally painless procedure, and will be scheduled between 7 and 14 days after your surgery. If you have not been scheduled for post-op evaluation and feel that you need to be seen for any reason, please call the office.