

## Gum Grafting Post-Operative Instructions

Proper care after your gum graft is essential for healing, comfort, and long-term success. Some swelling, discomfort, and minor bleeding are normal. Following these instructions closely will help protect the graft and ensure the best outcome.

### 1. DISCOMFORT & MEDICATIONS

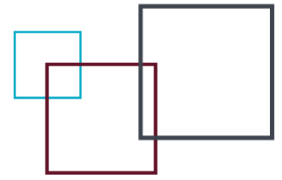
- Some discomfort is normal after surgery and varies based on the procedure and individual response.
  - Most discomfort occurs within the first 24–72 hours.
- Take medications exactly as prescribed. Changes may affect healing and the success of your procedure.
- **Pain medication options:**
  - Option 1: Take 600mg Ibuprofen with 500mg Tylenol (Acetaminophen) every 6 hours as needed.  
*OR*
  - Option 2: Take 600mg Ibuprofen with 1 tablet of Tylenol #3 every 6 hours as needed.
    - Tylenol 3 is a medication that is a combination of Tylenol (Acetaminophen) and Codeine. If you cannot take codeine or abstain from taking narcotic medications for any reason, please do not take Tylenol 3. Regular 500mg Tylenol is an acceptable substitution (option 1).
    - If taking narcotics:
      - Take with food.
      - Do not drive or consume alcohol.
- Contact the office if you experience: rash, itching, dizziness, difficulty breathing, fever, or diarrhea.
- If antibiotics are prescribed, please take as directed and as written on the label, unless instructed otherwise.
  - Consider taking probiotics (e.g., StellaLife Healthy Mouth and Gut) to prevent gastrointestinal issues.
- You may be prescribed a medication called Dexamethasone. This is a low-dose steroid used to reduce post-operative swelling in specific cases.
  - This medication can make some patients feel jittery, so avoid caffeine until you know how this medication affects you and avoid taking it right before bed.
- *Common Question:*
  - Can I take my regular medications?
    - Yes, unless you were specifically instructed to make changes to your regular medication dosing.

### 2. SWELLING

- Swelling and bruising are common and may occur after surgery.
- Swelling should begin to subside after 3–4 days.
  - After 48 hours, you may use moist heat if needed.
- Keep your head elevated above your heart for the first 24 hours (use extra pillows while sleeping).
- An ice pack should be used to minimize swelling. Place the ice pack in contact with the skin, 20 minutes on, 5 minutes off, for the first 24-48 hours after surgery.
- Throughout the day, fill a cup with ice and water, take sips of the cold water and hold it in your mouth, then gently spit or swallow the water. This helps apply cold directly to the surgical site.

### 3. BLEEDING

- Mild bleeding or oozing is normal for the first 24–48 hours.
- Avoid anything that could dislodge the clot:
  - No forceful spitting, rinsing, drinking through a straw, or blowing your nose.
- If you notice large blood clots or a steady flow of blood (beyond minor oozing), contact the office immediately.
- *Common Question:*
  - How much bleeding is normal?
    - Light oozing or pink saliva is normal; heavy bleeding is not



#### 4. SUTURES

- Sutures (stitches) may be placed to support healing.
  - Some dissolve on their own.
  - Others are removed at your 2-4 week follow-up appointment.
- Do not disturb the sutures with your tongue, toothbrush, or in any other manner since displacement will impair healing.
- Do not attempt to remove your sutures; if they are loose/irritating, please contact the office.

#### 5. GRAFT APPEARANCE

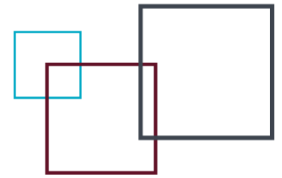
- The graft may look white, gray, or red during healing—this is normal.
- Avoid pulling your lip to look at the graft. Disturbing the area will impact the blood supply to the healing graft.
- You may notice purple tissue glue around the site; it's normal if small pieces fall off.

#### 6. DRESSING:

- A periodontal dressing may be applied over the surgical site for protection.
- If small pieces fall off and there is no discomfort or significant bleeding, this is not a concern.
- Avoid disturbing the area with your tongue or toothbrush

#### 7. ORAL HYGIENE

- Day of surgery: Do not brush, floss, rinse, or use any oral products immediately after your surgery.
- Day after surgery: Resume brushing and flossing only in the non-surgical areas.
- Do not touch the surgical site for the first 2 weeks unless directed.
  - After 2 weeks, use the soft surgical toothbrush provided—brush teeth only, avoiding the gums.
- Do not use over-the-counter mouthwashes.
- Rinse with the prescribed mouthwash as directed:
  - If using StellaLife, follow the instructions on the package.
  - If prescribed chlorhexidine rinse, start using it the evening after surgery:
    - Rinse gently, holding the solution in your mouth for 1 minute, then spit.
    - Use twice daily (morning and night) for 1 week.
- *Common Questions:*
  - What toothpaste should I use?
    - Use a gentle, non-whitening toothpaste during the first few weeks after surgery. Whitening or “tartar-control” toothpastes can sometimes be too abrasive and may irritate healing tissue.
  - Can I use an electric toothbrush?
    - Yes, but NOT on the surgical site. You can use it on the teeth not involved in the surgery. Avoid using an electric toothbrush directly over the surgical site for about 2-4 weeks or until we confirm healing is progressing well.
  - When can I start brushing the graft area?
    - We'll let you know at your follow-up appointment when it's safe to begin. This is typically after your sutures are removed and healing is progressing well.
  - Can I floss/use my WaterPik?
    - Wait to use anything to clean between your teeth until cleared by your doctor, usually 4-6 weeks.



## 8. DIET

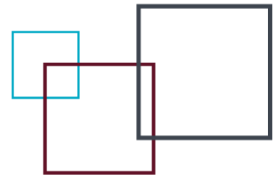
- Eat a soft diet high in protein and nutrients (e.g., eggs, yogurt, soup, bananas, fish, protein shakes).
  - A full list of recommended foods is on the last page.
- On the day of surgery, avoid hot food and drinks. We suggest choosing cool, soft foods such as smoothies or ice cream during this time, as they can feel soothing and help keep inflammation down.
  - Wait until the numbness wears off to eat.
- Avoid hard, sticky, crunchy, spicy, or “sharp” foods (such as chips, nuts, toasted bread, gummy candies, fibrous meats, raw vegetables), and any foods with small particles (sesame or poppy seeds).
- Avoid chewing on the surgical site until sutures are removed.
- Drink plenty of liquids, but don’t use a straw! Use a spoon if drinking a smoothie or milkshake.
- It is important to maintain a diet with a normal calorie level that is high in protein, minerals, and vitamins to support post-operative healing. Post-surgically is not the time to start a diet. This can have detrimental effects on healing and lessen the chances of success of the surgical therapy.

## 9. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

- Rest is very important for proper healing
- No physical activity for the first 2 weeks. You should avoid:
  - Strenuous exercise or heavy lifting
  - High-intensity workouts
  - Bending over frequently
  - Activities that significantly raise your heart rate or blood pressure
- These types of activities can increase bleeding, swelling, and discomfort at the extraction site.
- *Common Questions:*
  - Is it okay to run errands or go out socially during recovery?
    - Yes, as long as you feel comfortable. Keep activities light and avoid overexertion. A good rule of thumb is to listen to your body. If throbbing, bleeding, or increased swelling occurs when you become more active, it’s best to slow down and allow more time for healing.
  - What if my job requires a lot of talking or meetings?
    - Extended talking can strain the surgical area in the early days. Try to limit long conversations or meetings during the first week if possible.

## 10. NIGHT GUARDS / RETAINERS / DENTURES

- Please bring your appliance with you to your surgical appointment so we can evaluate it and make any necessary adjustments before surgery.
- *Common Questions:*
  - Can I wear my appliance right after surgery?
    - Only if your doctor has specifically approved it—otherwise, avoid wearing it until cleared.
  - Why does it need to be adjusted?
    - Even slight pressure on the graft can interfere with healing and impact the final result.
  - What if it feels uncomfortable after surgery?
    - If your appliance feels tight, rubs, or causes discomfort, stop using it and contact our office.



## 11. SMOKING / ALCOHOL:

- Do not smoke in any form, including cigarettes, vaping, marijuana, or any other substances, until after your sutures have been removed to ensure the best healing and success of your surgical procedure. Nicotine reduces blood flow and oxygen delivery to tissues, and marijuana and other substances negatively impact healing.
- All intake of alcohol should be stopped until 2 days after you have finished taking all medications related to this procedure. The combination of alcohol and certain medications is not recommended.

## 12. IMPORTANT 'DO NOT'S':

- Do not use straws or create suction in the mouth (for example, sucking on candies)
- Do not pull your lip to look at the surgical site or touch the site with fingers or tongue
- Do not spit forcefully or rinse aggressively
- Do not eat any hard, crunchy, sticky, or spicy foods
- Do not smoke or vape

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### CONTACT INFORMATION

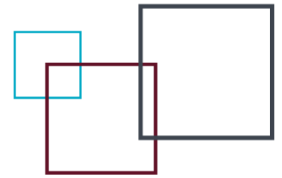
If you have questions during business hours, call the office at 202-393-6154.

For urgent concerns after hours—such as excessive bleeding, persistent pain, fever, or medication reactions—contact:

Dr. Raha Yousefi: (301) 537-3995

Dr. Lucy Johnson: (585) 280-0054

**FOR MEDICAL EMERGENCY CALL 911**



## DIETARY GUIDELINES

### First 1–3 Days After Surgery:

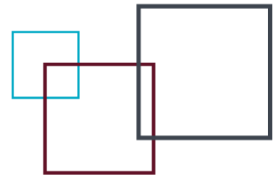
<p><b>✔ What You CAN Eat:</b></p> <p>Stick to <u>soft, cool, and non-irritating</u> foods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ice cream or sorbet (no nuts or chewy mix-ins)</li><li>• Smoothies (no seeds or chunks)</li><li>• Applesauce</li><li>• Mashed potatoes</li><li>• Scrambled eggs</li><li>• Yogurt (plain or without fruit chunks)</li><li>• Protein shakes</li><li>• Broths and blended soups (lukewarm or cold)</li></ul> <p>Tip: If you can, use the opposite side of your mouth when eating. Use a spoon instead of a straw to avoid suction pressure.</p>	<p><b>⊘ What to AVOID:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hot or spicy foods and drinks</li><li>• Crunchy snacks (chips, pretzels, popcorn)</li><li>• Seeds or small grains (chia, quinoa, sesame seeds, poppy seeds)</li><li>• Sticky foods (caramels, gummy candy, chewing gum)</li><li>• Alcohol</li><li>• Drinking through a straw</li><li>• Acidic foods and drinks (like citrus, tomato sauce, vinegar)</li></ul>
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### 4-7 Days After Surgery:

<p><b>✔ What You CAN Eat:</b></p> <p>You may begin to slowly incorporate more variety while keeping food soft:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Soft pasta</li><li>• Cooked, soft vegetables (squash, zucchini, potatoes)</li><li>• Soft fruits (bananas, canned fruits, avocado)</li><li>• Tender cooked meats (shredded chicken, ground turkey, ground beef)</li><li>• Soft fish (white fish or salmon)</li><li>• Pancakes</li><li>• Cottage cheese or soft cheeses</li><li>• Soft bread (no crusty edges) and muffins</li></ul>	<p><b>⊘ What to AVOID:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tough meats or chewy foods (steak, jerky, bagels)</li><li>• Raw vegetables or tough fruits (carrots, celery, apples, carrots)</li><li>• Crunchy foods (nuts, granola, toast)</li><li>• Sharp or pointy foods (tortilla chips, crackers)</li><li>• Acidic, spicy, or heavily seasoned dishes</li><li>• Drinking through a straw</li></ul>
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### 1-4 Weeks After Surgery:

<p><b>✔ Recommended Foods:</b></p> <p>As healing progresses, you can slowly return to a more normal diet, while continuing to be cautious and still avoiding anything too hard or sharp:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Most cooked vegetables and fruits</li><li>• Soft grains and pasta</li><li>• Lean meats and poultry</li><li>• Eggs, tofu, beans</li><li>• Soft sandwiches (no crusty bread)</li><li>• Soft snacks like muffins or banana bread</li></ul>	<p><b>⊘ Avoid These Foods Until Fully Healed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hard, crunchy snacks (chips, raw nuts, pretzels)</li><li>• Seeds or small grains (chia, quinoa, sesame seeds, poppy seeds)</li><li>• Hard crusts or chewy breads</li><li>• Tough meats or chewy protein bars</li><li>• Popcorn and seeds</li><li>• Sticky candies or gum</li></ul>
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## ✔ Recommended Soft Foods:

### Protein-rich options:

- Scrambled or soft-boiled eggs
- Greek yogurt (plain or low-sugar)
- Cottage cheese
- Soft tofu
- Smooth nut butters (like almond or peanut butter—without chunks)
- Protein shakes or smoothies (no straws—use a spoon or drink from a cup)

### Fruits & vegetables (cooked, blended, or mashed):

- Mashed bananas or avocado
- Applesauce (unsweetened preferred)
- Mashed potatoes or sweet potatoes
- Cooked carrots, squash, or zucchini (soft and well-cooked)
- Vegetable purees or soups (lukewarm)

### Grains & starches:

- Oatmeal or cream of wheat
- Well-cooked pasta (small shapes or mashed)
- Soft white rice or congee
- Pancakes or soft bread (no crusts, avoid toasted or seedy varieties)

### Other:

- Broths and blended soups (lukewarm, not hot)
- Gelatin (Jell-O)
- Pudding or custard
- Ice cream or sorbet (not too cold or with chunks)

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## ⊘ NOs:

- Straws
- Alcohol
- Smoking
- Chewing on the surgical side
- Anything crunchy, sticky, or hard (e.g., chips, nuts, popcorn, crusty bread)
- Seeds or small grains (chia, quinoa, sesame seeds, poppy seeds, rice)
- Foods that are hot in temperature
- Acidic, spicy, or highly seasoned dishes