

# *Orthognathic Surgery Post-Op Information*

**Stephen B. Baker, DDS, MD**

Orthognathic surgery requires mobilization and fixation of one, or both, jaws into a new position. The following instructions serve as a guide for post-operative care.

## **Medications**

You should have received the following prescriptions:

- Peridex rinse: rinse and spit once in the morning and once before bed
- Medrol (steroid) dose pack: take as directed on package
- Zofran: take as directed for nausea
- Pain medication: take as directed for pain
- Antibiotics: take as directed

The following “over the counter” medications are recommended:

- Saline nasal mist (Ocean Spray)-use to moisten nose as much as desired
- **Afrin-TRY TO AVOID. Definitely, do not use more than 3 days duration.**
- Pseudoephedrine-take 30mg every 6 hours as needed

## **Diet**

You will be sore after your surgery. You should limit yourself to a soft diet. High calorie fluids such as Ensure, Sustacal, GNC protein shakes, and Carnation Instant Breakfast are recommended for maintaining nutrition. Liquid yogurt such as “Gogurt” and “Danimals” are also easy to ingest. It is not unusual to lose 10-15 pounds after surgery. You should minimize this weight loss by forcing yourself to get as many calories as possible. When your body is healing, it requires extra nutrition. Soft foods such as scrambled eggs, yogurt, ice cream, oatmeal, pudding, and soup, are okay to eat as well. Initially after surgery, it may be helpful to put the fluids in a 60cc syringe and use a red catheter to feed yourself. The nurses in the hospital will aid you in this technique. Sports bottles with long straws that can be squeezed are good for getting liquids into your mouth easily after surgery. These can be purchased at any sporting goods store and are used for helmet sports such as hockey, football, lacrosse, etc.

## **Jaw Mobilization**

The typical patient does not have his/her jaws wired shut. Usually, rubber bands are used to allow the patient to be guided to his/her new occlusion. These are tight at first and are gradually loosened up to 2 weeks after surgery at which point they are removed.

## **Nausea and Vomiting**

It is not unusual to experience nausea and vomiting postoperatively. Usually, this is limited to the immediate postoperative period and is related to either blood that was

swallowed during surgery or the anesthesia medications. Zofran is one of the medications that you have that will help minimize this problem. If nausea/vomiting persists for more than 3 days, call Dr. Baker's office.

### **Bleeding**

It is not unusual to have some blood come out of the nose after surgery. If this becomes worse or if there is active bleeding, call Dr. Baker's office immediately.

### **Pain**

This procedure is not very painful compared to other procedures. The nerves that cause you pain in your cheeks and lower jaw will be temporarily numb from the stretching that occurs during surgery. The pain medication should be taken as directed for postoperative pain. You will feel malaise and lethargy that may take several weeks to resolve.

### **Sutures**

All the sutures are dissolvable except the small sutures on the cheeks. These are only present if Dr. Baker performed lower jaw surgery. It is normal for the sutures on the inside of the mouth be last about 2-3 weeks before they dissolve.

### **Oral Hygiene**

You may gently brush your teeth with the softest possible toothbrush and toothpaste. Use the Peridex rinse too as this has excellent antibiotic activity. A Water Pik™ may be used directly on the teeth and or splints but NOT into the wounds or at the sutures.

### **Swelling and Bruising**

Swelling will be significant. Jaw surgery is a major procedure that involves mobilizing facial bones. It is normal to experience a large degree of swelling. Most of this resolves by 3-4 weeks. Subtle degrees of improvement will occur for up to a year. Bruising is minor in teens but can be more prominent in adults. It is recommended that you wear the elastic "jaw bra" for 2 weeks 24 hrs/day and then only at night for 4 weeks after surgery.

### **Numbness**

It is normal for the cheeks and lower lip to be numb for several months after surgery. Numbness gradually improves with time, and almost all sensation will return to normal with time.

### **Congestion**

Because this surgery involves the maxillary sinuses, you will experience some congestion for several weeks postoperatively. Pseudoephedrine will help this congestion. This is an over the counter medication that can be taken as directed. Be careful not to use nasal sprays that constrict the mucosa (Afrin, etc.) for more than 3 days. Prolonged use of these drugs can lead to severe nasal congestion.

### **Bathing**

You can bathe as soon as it is comfortable. If you are dizzy or feel faint, do not get into a shower or bathtub and risk a fall. You should have a chaperone until you feel strong and

well enough to ambulate and move well without assistance. It is okay to get the face wet in the shower, and baths are okay unless an incision was made on your hip to harvest bone, in which case, you want to avoid water for 14 days

## **FAQs**

### **Should I apply ice to my face?**

Ice is typically only effective for about 24-48 hours after surgery. If used, apply periodically rather than continuously. Your face may be numb and your body will not be able to tell you that it is too cold.

### **How should I sleep?**

Keeping your head elevated on pillows is good for the first week after surgery to keep the swelling to a minimum.

### **When can I drive after surgery?**

Remember that narcotic pain relievers may impair motor skills. It is recommended that driving not be done until your pain is being relieved with over counter pain relievers like ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil), aspirin, or acetaminophen (Tylenol).

### **I cannot open my mouth wide and my elastics have been removed. Will my mouth open again?**

Just like a broken arm or leg that is freshly released from a cast, your jaws have been immobilized and they will take several weeks to regain full range of motion. It is normal for your mouth to be stiff immediately after the elastics are released.

### **I am losing weight and am concerned. Is this normal?**

It is typical for a patient to lose between 10-20 pounds depending on the exact procedures performed. Be sure to take as many calories as possible while recovering. This is not a time to be on a diet, your body needs nutrition to heal.

### **I felt a stitch come out. Is this normal?**

The sutures (stitches) are all dissolvable. They typically begin to come out in about 7-10 days.

### **I had a fever about 2-3 days after surgery. Is this okay?**

It is normal for anyone who has had a general anesthetic to have a low grade fever the first few days after surgery. This is not related to an infection. Wound infections typically do not cause fevers until 3-6 days after surgery.

## **Contact Information**

**If you need to contact Dr. Baker's office use the following numbers as instructed:**

- **8:30am-5:00pm 202-444-9302**
- **After hours call 202-444-7243 and have the plastic surgery resident on call paged. If you do not receive a response, you should have the page operator page Dr. Baker directly.**

