

After Soft Tissue Grafting

Post-operative instructions for gum graft surgery. Please review carefully.

Keep this document for reference during your recovery.

For emergencies, contact your treating office immediately. For general questions, email info@yantperio.com.

First 24 Hours

- **Bleeding:** Some bleeding and oozing is normal, particularly from the donor site on the roof of your mouth. Bite gently on gauze for 30 minutes. If bleeding persists, apply a moistened black tea bag with firm pressure. Contact your treating office if bleeding does not subside.
- **Ice:** Apply ice packs to the outside of your face near the grafted area, 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off, for the first 24 hours.
- **Rest:** Rest for the remainder of the day with your head elevated. Use an extra pillow while sleeping.
- **No touching:** Do not touch, pull on, or look at the graft site. Disturbing the graft in the first weeks can cause it to fail.
- **No smoking:** Do not smoke or use any tobacco products. Smoking is the leading cause of graft failure.

Protecting the Graft

The graft must remain undisturbed during the first 2 weeks. Do not pull your lip or cheek to look at the graft site. Do not brush, floss, or use a Waterpik near the graft.

The graft needs to establish a blood supply from the underlying tissue. Any mechanical disruption, even gently touching it with your tongue, can dislodge the graft and compromise the result.

Medications

Take all prescribed medications as directed. For pain control, alternate Ibuprofen 800mg and Tylenol (Acetaminophen) 1000mg every 3 to 4 hours. Do not exceed 3,200mg of Ibuprofen or 4,000mg of Tylenol in a 24-hour period (these maximums are for healthy adults; those with liver or kidney disease should consult their physician).

Why we recommend both: Ibuprofen and Tylenol work through different mechanisms. Ibuprofen is an anti-inflammatory that reduces swelling and pain at the surgical site. Tylenol blocks pain signals in the brain. When alternated together, they provide significantly better pain relief than either one alone. If you are only able to take one medication, Ibuprofen should be your first choice because controlling inflammation after surgery is critical to both pain management and healing.

If you received Exparel (long-acting anesthetic): Exparel provides numbing at the surgical site for approximately 3 days. Even though you may feel comfortable during this time, we still strongly recommend taking Ibuprofen on schedule throughout those 3 days. When the Exparel wears off, you will experience pain if you have not been keeping up with your anti-inflammatory medication. Staying ahead of the pain is much easier than trying to catch up once it starts.

If antibiotics were prescribed, complete the full course. If chlorhexidine rinse was prescribed, begin 24 hours after surgery. Rinse gently, allowing the rinse to flow over the area. Do not swish vigorously.

Diet

First 24 hours: Eat only cool or room-temperature foods. Hot food and beverages can increase bleeding and may burn your mouth if you are still numb from anesthesia. Chew on the opposite side of your mouth from the graft site.

First 2 weeks: Eat soft foods only. Avoid anything crunchy, sharp, tiny, spicy, or acidic. Small particles can become lodged near the graft and compromise healing. Continue chewing on the opposite side.

- **Good choices:** Scrambled eggs, yogurt, mashed potatoes, smoothies (no straw), protein shakes, lukewarm soup (after the first 24 hours), soft pasta, cottage cheese, applesauce.
- **Avoid:** Anything crunchy, sharp, tiny, hot (first 24 hours), spicy, or acidic. Avoid chips, nuts, seeds, rice, toast, raw vegetables, citrus, tomatoes, and alcohol.

Do not use a straw. The suction can dislodge the graft or blood clot.

Donor Site (Roof of Mouth) and Surgical Stent

A surgical stent (similar to an Invisalign retainer) has been provided to protect the donor site on the roof of your mouth while it heals.

First 3 days: Wear the surgical stent 100% of the time. Remove it only to clean it, then replace it immediately. The stent protects the donor site during the most critical phase of healing and significantly improves your comfort.

After day 3: The stent is now purely for your comfort. Most patients choose to continue wearing it during meals for the next 2 weeks to protect the roof of the mouth while eating. Beyond that, you are welcome to wear it for as much or as little as you like based on how you feel.

Cleaning: Rinse the stent with cool water each time you remove it. You may gently brush it with a soft toothbrush. Do not use hot water as it can warp the stent.

- **Pain:** The donor site is often more uncomfortable than the graft site. This is normal. Pain medication and wearing the surgical stent will help manage this.
- **Bleeding:** If the donor site bleeds, place the surgical stent back in and apply gentle biting pressure. If bleeding persists, apply firm pressure with gauze or a tea bag for 30 minutes.
- **Healing:** The roof of your mouth will heal completely within 2 to 4 weeks. The tissue regenerates on its own.
- **Eating:** Avoid crunchy or sharp foods that contact the roof of your mouth. Keep food cool or room-temperature for the first 24 hours. The surgical stent can be worn during meals for added protection.

Oral Hygiene

Do not brush, floss, or use any cleaning device in the grafted area for the first week.

Brush and floss normally in all other areas of your mouth. After 24 hours, rinse gently with warm salt water or prescribed chlorhexidine. Let the solution flow gently out of your mouth.

After 1 week, you may begin gently brushing the teeth in the grafted area with an ultra-soft toothbrush. Brush up and away from the gum line only. Do not brush directly on the graft or along the gum margin.

Do not floss the grafted area until your sutures have been removed at your follow-up appointment.

Sutures

Sutures in the grafted area will remain in place for approximately 1 month. We will remove them at your follow-up appointment.

Some sutures may begin to loosen or fall out on their own before your appointment. This is okay and does not mean there is a problem. Do not pull on, tug, or try to remove any sutures yourself. If a suture comes loose, leave it alone and continue your recovery as directed.

Activity

Avoid strenuous activity, heavy lifting, and bending over for at least 72 hours. Exercise increases blood pressure and can cause bleeding or compromise graft healing. Resume light activity after 3 days and full activity after 1 week as tolerated.

What to Expect During Healing

- **Appearance:** The graft may appear white or yellowish in the first week. This is normal and does not mean the graft has failed. The tissue is establishing blood supply and will gradually take on a pink, healthy color.
- **Swelling:** Mild to moderate swelling is normal and peaks on days 2 to 3.
- **Bruising:** Bruising near the graft or donor site may occur and resolves within 7 to 14 days.
- **Numbness:** Temporary numbness near the graft site may occur and typically resolves within a few weeks.

When to Contact Us

- Excessive bleeding that does not respond to pressure
- Severe pain not controlled by medications
- Fever above 101.5 degrees Fahrenheit
- The graft appears to have shifted or detached
- Significant swelling that worsens after day 3
- Any concerns or questions about your recovery