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Diplomate of the American Board of Periodontology

Periodontics & Dental Implants

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POST- SURGICAL INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. DISCOMFORT AND MEDICATIONS:** Periodontal surgery, like other surgical procedures, may be associated with varying degrees of discomfort. This depends on the procedure involved and individual differences. If analgesics have been prescribed, it is usually best to take the first dose while the surgical site is still anesthetized (“numb”). All medications should be taken strictly as prescribed. The interval between taking the medications and the total length of time that you are to remain on your medications has been carefully determined to give you the maximum benefit with the minimum use of drugs. Variation from the prescribed regimen can affect healing and the success of your procedure.
- 2. BLEEDING:** You may notice slight bleeding from the surgical site. This type of minor bleeding for one or two days is not unusual and is not a major concern. If at any time you notice the formation of large blood clots or an obvious flow of blood, which is more than a slight ooze, notify Dr. Cataldo at once.
- 3. SWELLING:** Some slight swelling of the operated area is not unusual and may begin after the surgery. An ice pack may be used to minimize swelling. Ice should be placed in a plastic bag and then wrapped in a thin cloth towel and applied directly over the surgical area. You should maintain the towel wrapped ice pack in contact with the skin as much as possible for the first 24 hours after surgery. You should also keep your head elevated above the level of your heart during the first 24 hours after surgery. This may necessitate the use of several pillows to support your head and upper body while sleeping. If swelling occurs, it usually disappears after several days. Applying moist heat to the swollen area will help the swelling resolve however **heat should not be applied until at least 1-2 days after surgery**. Any unusual or large swelling should be reported to Dr. Cataldo at once.
- 4. SUTURES:** **Dissolving** sutures (“stitches”) are placed to hold the gingival tissues in the proper position for ideal healing. If sutures (“stitches”) were placed, Dr. Cataldo will usually remove them at your post surgical appointment, although they may be left in place to dissolve on their own once sufficient healing has occurred. **Do not disturb the sutures with your tongue, toothbrush or in any other manner since displacement will impair healing**. If you notice that a suture has come out or come loose, notify Dr. Cataldo during regular office hours.
- 5. DRESSING:** A periodontal dressing is often used to cover the surgical site for one or two weeks after surgery. The dressing is placed around your teeth to protect the surgical area and should not be disturbed. If small pieces become lost, and you have no discomfort, there

is no cause for concern. If large pieces break off or if the entire dressing becomes loose in the first 2 - 4 days, please contact Dr. Cataldo.

6. **RINSING:** Avoid vigorous rinsing for the first 24 hours following surgery. Cold water held in the mouth during the first 12 - 14 hours may help reduce slight bleeding. A Chlorhexidine rinse two or three times per day will probably be prescribed. This rinse is normally used for 2 weeks following surgery.

7. **DIET:** For your comfort and to protect the surgical area, we recommend a soft diet. Avoid chewing in the area of surgery. Avoid hard, fibrous, or "sharp" foods (such as corn chips) as these may be uncomfortable and can dislodge the periodontal dressing. **Drink plenty of liquids.**

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. Eat as normal a diet as possible. **POST SURGICALLY IS NOT THE TIME TO START A DIET**, since this can have detrimental effects on healing and lessen the chances of success of the surgical therapy.

8. **ORAL HYGIENE:** The surgical area should not be disturbed for the first week post-operatively. Continue to brush and floss the teeth, which were not involved in the surgery (or covered by the periodontal dressing). You may rinse gently with salt water or with a mouthwash if prescribed by Dr. Cataldo (usually Chlorhexidine). After the sutures have been removed, generally after 1 week, you should lightly clean the teeth using a soft toothbrush or as instructed by your doctor.

9. **PHYSICAL ACTIVITY:** Avoid strenuous physical activity during your immediate recovery period, usually 2 to 3 days.

10. **SMOKING:** All smoking should be stopped until after your sutures have been removed to ensure the best healing and success of your surgical procedure. Healing results are significantly worse in smokers than in non-smokers.

11. **ALCOHOL:** Intake of alcohol should be minimized until after your sutures have been removed and for the next several weeks after removal to enhance healing. The combination of alcohol and certain pain medications is not recommended.

12. **DO NOT'S:** For the next several days, do NOT disturb the surgical wound, spit, smoke, rinse hard, drink through a straw, create a "sucking" action in your mouth, use a commercial mouthwash, drink carbonated soda, or use an oral irrigating device.

13. **SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:**

If you have any questions or problems, please do not hesitate to call the office. If you are not feeling significantly better after 4 days, or you notice swelling beginning to develop, please contact Dr. Cataldo. Dr. Cataldo can be reached via cell phone at: (919) 943-9815