

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CENTER FOR ORAL AND FACIAL SURGERY

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INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS FOLLOWING ORTHOGNATHIC SURGERY

1. Orthognathic surgery is a major procedure performed to correct the position of the jaws. As with any other surgical procedure, there are certain things to expect during the healing period, and certain side effects which are possible due to the nature of the surgery. By following post-operative instructions carefully, you can help keep yourself comfortable and minimize any complications.
2. It is important that you go to each follow-up appointment your doctor has scheduled for you. He needs to evaluate the progress of your healing until it is complete. If you fail to follow your doctors' instructions or if you stop treatment before healing is complete, you are at high risk of developing complications such as infection, non-union of the surgical site, improper occlusion(bite), or nerve damage. These problems, if not diagnosed and treated early, can have serious effects on your overall health.
3. Swelling and bruising are normal reactions to surgery, and vary from patient to patient and from one surgery to another. Application of ice to the surgical sites during the first 24 hours helps reduce the amount of swelling. Use the ice packs 20 minutes on/ 20 minutes off or alternate from side to side every 20 minutes. After the first 24 hours, the ice will not have much effect on swelling, but may make the surgical site feel better. Swelling usually reaches its maximum about 48 - 72 hours after surgery. Swelling can be reduced by sleeping in a semi-upright position in bed. Using two pillows is usually adequate for this. Bruising will resolve on its own, but may take up to a week or more.
4. It is not unusual to have difficulty opening the mouth due to post-operative swelling in the muscles. This should resolve on its own with time.
5. Application of moist heat 4 to 6 times per day to the surgical sites beginning 72 hours after surgery increases the local blood circulation and helps to take away swelling. Do not apply heat until 3 days after surgery unless the doctor tells you otherwise.
6. It is **VERY IMPORTANT TO KEEP YOUR MOUTH CLEAN** in the weeks following surgery. The splint, orthodontic bands and wires in your mouth are an irritation to your gums, but the cleaner you keep your mouth, the less of a problem this will be. You may begin cleaning your mouth as soon as you get home. It will be uncomfortable at first, and your gums may bleed, but it will become easier as time goes on. The bands and wires should be kept so clean that they sparkle like new. You need to brush your teeth and the appliances after every meal, no matter how small, plus 3 - 5 additional times per day (6 - 8 times per day total). You do not need to use toothpaste each time - it is the brushing action that is important. It is also good to rinse out your mouth three or four times a day. Warm salt water or mouth wash can be used for this purpose. If you have nothing else, use plain water. A Water-Pik or similar device is also helpful for keeping your mouth as clean as possible.
7. If you had any teeth extracted as part of your surgery, it is normal to have mild bleeding from the extraction site. Do not spit the blood out, as this will remove the blood clot from the socket and bleeding will continue. It will not harm you to swallow a small amount of blood in your saliva. If there appears to be excessive bleeding, call the office for advice.
8. Diet is another important consideration. Because of your inability to chew, it will be very difficult to take an adequate diet. It is not unusual to lose 10 to 15 pounds during the post-operative period. Therefore, several meals (6, 7, or 8 per day) will be necessary. High calorie, high protein full liquids will be your diet for the entire healing period. Anything (even pizza and meats) that can be mixed with whole milk and liquified in a blender will help in the dietary intake. Additional dietary supplements may include Carnation Instant Breakfast, Sego, Ensure, etc. Liquid multi-vitamins should also be used. **Do not chew** even very soft foods until your surgeon has given you permission.. The slightest amount of chewing can cause mobility of the bones as they attempt to heal and can seriously compromise your surgical result.
9. Medications which have been prescribed for you are important. If an antibiotic has been prescribed, it is very important to continue taking it as directed until all has been taken. An antibiotic rinse may also be prescribed. Also, a liquid pain medication can be taken as directed only if needed for discomfort. Do not take any medications,

other than those prescribed, without the knowledge of your surgeon. Aspirin and related drugs should be avoided, as they can prolong bleeding. Birth control pills are inactivated by most antibiotics. Another method of contraception should be used for the remainder of the menstrual cycle. If you develop hives, a rash or any adverse reactions to a medication, discontinue all medication and contact the office immediately.

10. Your lips may be dry and cracked due to stretching the corners of your mouth during surgery. Your lips should be kept moist with vaseline or other lip ointments.
11. There may be a slight elevation in temperature for 24 to 48 hours after surgery. This is a normal body response to the surgery. Infection is very rare following orthognathic surgery. If the temperature persists or is greatly elevated, please notify the office. A post-operative infection usually takes about three days to develop.
12. Post-operative nausea is usually due to swallowing a small amount of blood during and/or after surgery. A small amount of carbonated drink, such as 7-Up or ginger ale every hour for 5 or 6 hours will usually relieve this feeling. Sometimes pain medications can cause nausea. If nausea continues, contact this office. If your jaws are wired, nausea is no cause for alarm. Remember that even if you should become nauseated and vomit, everything that is in your stomach has been strained through your teeth and can easily pass back through. However, at the first sign of persistent, significant nausea, call your oral surgeon and he will prescribe anti-nausea medication for you in suppository form.
13. All patients with jaws wired should not drink alcohol for the period of fixation. No vigorous exercise, strenuous activity or swimming should be allowed because of the difficulty in breathing and the strain on your fixation wires. It may also cause increased swelling. To facilitate breathing, a decongestant spray (e.g.: Afrin or Neo-Synephrine nasal spray) should be bought at a pharmacy and carried with the patient for cases of nasal congestion. This should be used very sparingly.
14. Your period of fixation (having your jaws wired together) will range from 1-8 weeks depending on your individual type of corrective procedure performed and the method of stabilizing the bone segments. If your jaws are wired, you should carry your wire cutters with you at all times to be used to cut all the vertical wires between your upper and lower teeth in case of emergency.
15. If you have had orthodontic treatment before surgery, further treatment will be required after surgery for a variable amount of time. The surgery repositioned your jaws into proper relation, orthodontics after surgery will fine-tune the relationship of the individual teeth.
16. It is expected that your gums and teeth in the area of surgery will be numb for a variable amount of time. If you had surgery on your upper jaw, it is expected that your upper lip, cheeks and side of nose will have altered or absent sensation. The same will be true for your lower lip, tongue and cheeks if you had lower jaw surgery. It sometimes takes many months for feeling to return to normal, and in very rare instances, altered sensation can be permanent. Occasionally, the nerve to move the lip does not function for a variable period after surgery, generally one to two months, although this may persist indefinitely.
17. Smoking after surgery reduces blood circulation to the tissues and will increase the risk of skin breakdown, scar formation and delayed or impaired healing. The smoke is also an irritant to the tissues and the incisions in your mouth and will increase discomfort and compromise tissue health.
18. If any incisions were made on your face, it is important to take good care of these sites to minimize scarring. Keep the wound covered for the first three days after surgery. Clean the wound twice daily and apply antibiotic ointment for the first 10 days. After this, when you go outside, cover the wound with sunscreen (SPF15 or greater) for the first six months.

IF YOU HAVE ANY POST-OPERATIVE PROBLEMS OR QUESTIONS, DO NOT HESITATE TO CALL THE OFFICE SO WE MAY HELP YOU. SOMEONE WILL ALWAYS BE ON CALL AFTER OFFICE HOURS IF THERE IS A PROBLEM.