

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PATIENTS IN INTERMAXILLARY FIXATION

ORTHOGNATHIC SURGERY:

Orthognathic surgery is performed to realign the jaw bones so the teeth fit together properly when the jaws function. It is normally performed in conjunction with orthodontics where braces are used to align the teeth on each jaw bone. This surgery is also performed in the correction of trauma to the jaw.

ELASTIC JAWS:

Most osteotomy surgeries and some broken jaw patients require elastic for 6 – 7 weeks following the surgery. They will have two elastics on each side, using orthodontic braces or arch bars.

ELASTIC CUTTER:

During the time your jaw is closed with the elastics you should carry scissors. They can be used in an emergency to cut the four vertical elastics on each side of the jaw to open your mouth. This should only be done in cases of “extreme emergency.”

SWELLING:

You will have some swelling to a greater or lesser degree. This is normal and expected as the body salts go to the surgical area. You should expect swelling of lips, cheeks, and areas around the jaw bones following surgery. The swelling peaks about 3 to 4 days after the surgery and may take 6 to 10 weeks to totally resolve. Ice packs for 72 hours after surgery help to reduce the swelling. Medication was also given to you in the IV to help reduce the swelling. After the first 72 hours, heat may be used to the outside of the face using a warm moist washcloth. A heating pad can also help reduce muscle tightness. Occasional bruising is normal and dissipates gradually after surgery.

BREATHING:

If you have difficulty breathing at night, sleep with your head on two pillows. Use of Afrin Nasal spray can help also. Humidification of room air with a vaporizer can help keep nasal secretions moist for easy removal. Pediatric ear syringes can be used for nasal suctioning. A warm shower can also help you breath easier, be careful of taking too hot of a shower and becoming faint. If you had upper jaw surgery remember **“DO NOT BLOW YOUR NOSE”**.

NAUSEA:

Nausea is uncommon during the time your jaw is closed. If it should occur try to settle your stomach with some clear liquids such as coke and 7-up or you can take an over the counter medication called Emetrol as directed. If vomiting occurs, the fluids should clear the throat through the nose and between the teeth. Only cut the elastics in an emergency. Call the office and notify Dr. Austin of the difficulties you are experiencing.

NUTRITIONAL INTAKE

The diet after surgery is liquid. Have plenty of juices and drinks on hand so you don't become dehydrated. At first it is easiest to have very thin liquids to drink. You can increase the thickness as the swelling of your lips and cheeks decreases. At first you will have a syringe to push the fluids into your mouth and you will be able to drink from a cup shortly after. Protein supplements and liquid vitamins are helpful to help keep energy levels up during the recovery time. Sustacal, Ensure, Carnation instant breakfast, and Meritene are protein drinks. You can buy these at most drug stores. Use of a blender is recommended to puree foods.

WEIGHT:

Most people lose an average of 15lbs. after the surgery, 10 pounds the first two weeks and then a pound a week thereafter. Weigh yourself every 3 to 4 days to make sure you are not losing too much weight. Let Dr. Austin know of your weight loss at each visit.

ORAL CARE:

The importance of oral care cannot be over emphasized. Do not brush your teeth the first post operative day. Begin brushing your teeth the second day using a soft tooth brush and toothpaste of your choice. Avoid the surgical incision site. Start rinsing your mouth with warm salt water rinses (½ tsp. salt in 8 oz. warm water). Rinse after each meal and before bed. You may also use a half strength solution of hydrogen peroxide as a rinse. (Equal amounts of hydrogen peroxide and water). This serves to remove debris from the surgical area and the teeth. It also aids in preventing infection. A clean mouth heals faster. The use of a Water Pic irrigating device can be used, but only with Dr. Austin's okay.

MEDICATION:

You will be put on an antibiotic which will need to be taken until it is gone. Pain medication should be taken as needed to relieve pain, not on a regular basis. A liquid nasal decongestant can also be taken as needed. If you are on other daily medications, they can be crushed and dissolved in juice to be taken. Be alert to signs of allergic reaction: hives, itching, rash. If you seem to have sensitivity to the medication causing nausea or vomiting, call the office and other medication can be prescribed.

NUMBNESS:

Due to the nature of the surgery and the swelling there is usually some temporary numbness which is present. This aids in helping there to be less pain after surgery. The numbness usually resolves itself within 2 weeks to 4 months but can take longer. There is a possibility of permanent numbness due to scar tissue binding down the nerve. This is usually the case if feeling has not returned after 1 year.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES:

Avoid contact sports, weight lifting, fights, etc... If your job requires a lot of physical labor, please let us know and we will set a day to return to work.

SLEEP:

Get plenty of rest; don't over do it the first several weeks after surgery. If you have difficulty sleeping at night, let Dr. Austin know.

POST OPERATIVE EXAMS:

It will be necessary for you to have post operative check-ups. Your first exam will be a week after you get out of the hospital.

REMOVAL OF ELASTICS:

On the days your elastics are removed, your jaw muscles will be stiff, causing some limited jaw mobility. You will certainly not be able to open your mouth wide enough to eat a "Big Mac" but you will be able to open it some. You should expect some aches in the jaw muscles, ear aches, or headaches as you stretch the muscles through normal eating, talking, and swallowing. Dr. Austin may apply lighter rubber bands to help you train the muscles to function in your new bite. If necessary you can ask Dr. Austin about physical therapy to help loosen the stiffness in the jaw muscles if they don't loosen on their own in a week or so.

If for any reason you are worried about the condition of your mouth or if any unexpected developments should cause concern, please call the office before 4:00 or in an emergency the answering service will get a hold of Dr. Austin after normal office hours. We are always happy to answer any questions.

We wish you the best with your recovery.

Dr. Blaine D. Austin and staff