



PRE AND POST SURGERY INSTRUCTIONS FOR CORRECTIVE JAW SURGERY

PHASE 1 -- IMMEDIATELY BEFORE AND AFTER SURGERY

Prior to your corrective jaw surgery, you will visit Dr. Mueller to have molds and records taken. This office appointment can vary between 1 to 2 hours in length. It will consist of taking x-rays, molds and photographs and is an opportunity for you to have all your remaining questions answered. It's also an opportune time for any family member(s) that maybe with you to also discuss with your surgeon the period following surgery. You will sign all of your consents and photo release at this time.

Prior to your surgery, it is imperative that you have seen the orthodontist for placement of surgical hooks and passive arch wires. You should also see your family dentist for a generalized cleaning since oral hygiene will be a little difficult for the first 2 weeks. Also, you should enjoy a normal routine and savor your favorite meals, since these will be curtailed for at least 1 month after surgery.

***You must have a complete physical by your family doctor (PCP) within 30 days of your procedure. This is required by the hospital anesthesia service.

The day before your surgery, it is important that you thoroughly brush all your teeth and appliances.

The day of your surgery, you will first meet the anesthetist who will bring you to the operating room and guide you through the process over the next few hours. Depending on your specific procedure, the length of the surgery will vary between 2 - 5 hours. This is different for all patients and this will be explained to you.

When you wake up from your surgery, your teeth will be held together with small elastics, just to help you guide into your new occlusion (bite). These elastics, if present, will be changed after the first week.

You will be completely numb on the jaw that was operated on, so there is not a great amount of pain. However, the swelling starts up immediately and there is some jaw stiffness to be anticipated. There is some soreness from the breathing tube that the anesthetist places and this soreness will also subside with time.

You may or may not be admitted to the hospital for an overnight stay. Dr. Mueller will discuss the arrangements for your care after surgery with you and your family.



Immediately After Surgery

1. All patients feel discomfort after an operation, although the level of discomfort varies from patient to patient. Take your medications as directed.
2. When you go home, it is important that a friend or relative spends the first night with you. Continue to take any medications you had been taking previously and follow the instructions on the bottle.
3. You will be able to shower on the second day after surgery. You must avoid hot, prolonged showers which may cause bleeding in the upper jaw if surgery was performed there.
4. Avoid exercises, any heavy lifting or activity that raises your blood pressure or pulse for at least one month after the surgery. The blood vessels are still healing from the surgery and any increase in activity may cause bleeding. You may begin gentle exercises such as lengthy walking after 2 weeks, but do not do any cardio exercises for 4 weeks after the surgery.
5. Do not drive a vehicle or perform any task that requires coordination or judgment for at least 48 hours following your anesthetic or if you still require the narcotic medications.

Prescriptions

You will be provided with prescriptions for any medications you will need during your recovery period. Dr. Mueller will discuss the medications with you prior to your surgery. You will receive your prescriptions prior to your procedure. Your prescriptions will typically consist of: A narcotic pain reliever, an antibiotic pill, an antibiotic rinse, steroids for inflammation and a medication for nausea.

Diet

Immediately after surgery, you will need to stay on a **clear liquid diet** to ensure that the wounds do not get burdened with debris. Please see our section on Nutrition for meal and drink supplement suggestions.

Hygiene

If you are having surgery on your upper jaw, the amount of swelling that will take place in your cheeks will make it difficult to brush your teeth for a few days. In fact, you should not brush your teeth for 1 full week after surgery, otherwise the incisions can be damaged and bleeding may start. You should use warm saline rinses (1/2 teaspoon salt mixed in 8 ounces of warm water). You can rinse your mouth with salt water as often as you would like. Dr. Mueller recommends that you rinse every 2 hours. You cannot do enough rinses. This will keep your mouth nice and clean and will also tend to shrink the incision lines inside your mouth. You may also be given a prescription for Peridex, an anti-bacterial mouth rinse. If that is given to you, use it as prescribed.



Swelling

The swelling will vary from patient to patient. You must anticipate a large degree of swelling over your cheek area if you have a procedure on your upper jaw. There is swelling around the lower jaw and upper neck if the lower jaw is treated. The swelling is maximal at Day 4 and will slowly subside after 2 weeks. There is still about 10 to 20% of swelling that can maintain up to a month after surgery. Dr. Mueller will give you a prescription for steroids for the swelling. The combination of steroids, ice packs and head elevation will help to reduce the swelling.

You should place ice on your face while you are awake for the first 3 to 4 days. The ice will also have a numbing effect that will reduce any post-operative sensitivity. You must be careful not to apply too much ice directly on the skin, as it may cause burns. Dr. Mueller recommends a regimen of 20 minutes on and 10 minutes off for corrective jaw surgery. After Day 4, warm moist heat is then recommended to help reduce swelling.

Bruising

Bruising is also quite normal after jaw surgery. Depending on which jaw was operated on, you may have bruising in the area of your upper cheek and eyes as well as your lower cheeks and down into your neck. It is not unusual to have some bruising extend all the way onto your chest. The bruising may be unsightly, but you must understand it is perfectly normal and should not be of any concern. It will go away after about 2 weeks.

Activity

You should maintain minimal activity with the first week. You are able to walk and move about but you should not do any exercises, jogging or weight lifting, regardless of how well you feel. You will have lost some blood during the operation and you may be feeling weak or faint. It may take one month before you fully recover from the amount of blood loss and strength due to your surgery.

Other Findings

You may have some sinus and nasal congestion if you have your upper jaw treated. Do not forcefully blow your nose as it may initiate bleeding. Dr. Mueller recommends a humidifier or vaporizer at your bedside and only to wipe your nose to blot the drainage. You may also experience some joint noises on the right and left hand side. Your joints need to get accustomed to their new position if the lower jaw is treated.

If you were not given a post-op appointment, you should give our office a call. Dr. Mueller will want to see you between 4 and 7 days post-op.



PHASE II -- 1 TO 4 WEEKS AFTER SURGERY

In this phase, the majority of swelling and bruising will have peaked and are starting to subside. It is now a time to get your jaws actively working again so that you can resume normal activity. There are a few points to remember and a few changes:

Diet

Depending on the amount of mouth opening you have and also the amount of elastics that may be placed, your diet will be still restricted to your mouth opening. However, you can now start moving up to a more substantial “**non-chew diet.**” You can eat things such as: soft cheeses, milk shakes, nutritional supplements (such as Ensure or Boost), omelettes and scrambled eggs, pureed vegetables and meats of a similar consistency to baby food, starches such as mashed potatoes and pasta, other proteins such as minced meat and white fish. Please see suggestions in our Nutrition section.

Hygiene

Now that the swelling is slowly starting to subside, you will be able to get into the mouth and cheek areas a little bit more easily. You should purchase a new toothbrush and using a small amount of toothpaste, concentrate on brushing the metal braces. You should spend at least 15-20 minutes in the evening prior to going to bed to do a thorough cleaning of all the teeth and brackets. Not only will this make you feel a little better, it will also help reduce any swelling around the gums and cheeks. Continue rinsing your mouth with salt water at least twice a day, but be careful not to injure the wounds with the head of the toothbrush. If you do hit the wounds, there may be a little bleeding, but this is normal and should not cause any worry.

Swelling

The swelling will begin to subside and by the second and third week, the majority of it will be gone, but remember, there is still about 10-20% that can maintain up to 2 months. Ice will no longer help reduce the swelling; you may want to switch to using warm moist heat over the area. However, this small amount of swelling will go down on its own.

Bruising

Bruising may still be evident into the second week, as far down as into the neck and chest areas. Although this is unsightly, it is perfectly normal and will go away.

Activity

You will still be feeling slightly weak due to the surgery itself and the minor blood loss. You can start a regular routine of very mild physical exercise such as brisk walking, but you should still avoid any heavy running or activities that will produce too much motion in the head and neck areas. Simple walking is encouraged and will help with the elimination of some swelling.



New Findings

The joints on the right and left-hand sides near your ears may now be functioning a little bit more, but due to your jaw surgery, they will find themselves in a new position. It is not unusual to hear some noises such as clicking or popping of the joint as you start to function more and more. These joint noises and discomforts may continue up until about 6 weeks post-surgery if you experience this.

If you have had upper jaw surgery, the numbness tends to be reduced in the upper lip and jaw area and this is first felt as an itchy or pins and needles sensation. In the lower lip area, there will still be some numbness and pins and needles at least up until 6 months after surgery.

Last Phase

Your appointments will now continue probably every 2 weeks. The antibiotics will have been terminated at this stage. If you need medication to help you sleep through the night, just speak to Dr. Mueller. Your final phase will be from approximately 4 to 8 weeks after the surgery. Once the bones are healed at about 8 weeks, Dr. Mueller will send you back to your orthodontist to begin the final orthodontic phase which typically lasts between 3 -9 months.