



TOOTHLOGY

Bone Graft Home Care Instructions

Immediate Post-Operative Care (First 24 Hours)

- **Bite on gauze:** Keep firm pressure on the gauze pad over the extraction site for 45 to 60 minutes. Replace only if soaked.
- **Do not disturb the graft:** Avoid touching the socket with your tongue, fingers, or toothbrush. Leave the area completely alone.
- **Expect loose granules:** You may feel small, sand-like bone particles in your mouth. This is normal and expected.
- **Do not spit or rinse:** Swallow your saliva normally. Spitting or aggressive rinsing will dislodge the graft and the protective blood clot.
- **Apply ice packs:** Place ice wrapped in a towel on your cheek for 20 minutes on, 20 minutes off, to minimize facial swelling.

Pain Management Protocol

- **Take medication early:** Take your first dose of pain medication while your mouth is still numb from the local anesthesia.
- **Use scheduled anti-inflammatories:** Take Ibuprofen (600–800 mg) every 6 to 8 hours as prescribed to stop swelling before it peaks.
- **Layer extra pain relief:** If you experience breakthrough pain, alternate Acetaminophen (Tylenol) between your Ibuprofen doses. Stay under 3,000 mg of Tylenol daily.
- **Finish your antibiotics:** Take every dose of your prescribed antibiotic until the bottle is empty to prevent graft infection and premature failure.

Oral Hygiene and Cleaning

- **No rinsing on Day 1:** Leave your mouth entirely alone for the first 24 hours to let the graft stabilize.
- **Gentle warm salt rinses:** Starting Day 2, gently bathe your mouth with warm salt water (1/2 tsp salt in warm water) 4 to 5 times daily. Do not swish aggressively.
- **Brush other teeth normally:** Clean your remaining teeth carefully, but do not brush directly over the socket or the stitches.
- **Avoid commercial mouthwashes:** Do not use peroxide, alcohol-based rinses, or whitening mouthwashes, which delay tissue healing.

Diet and Nutrition

- **Stick to cold liquids first:** Drink plenty of water and smooth fluids on the first day. Avoid all hot liquids.
- **Strictly avoid straws:** The suction from a straw can pull the bone graft out of the socket and ruin the procedure.
- **Eat soft foods only:** Eat soft foods like yogurt, pudding, applesauce, mashed potatoes, and scrambled eggs for the first week.
- **Chew on the opposite side:** Keep all food completely away from the surgical side of your mouth.
- **Avoid sharp or seedy foods:** Do not eat chips, nuts, popcorn, rice, or berries with seeds, as they can easily lodge in the graft.

Care Guidelines: Weeks 2 to 12 (The Bone Regeneration Phase)

- **Protect the protective membrane:** If your surgeon placed a protective membrane over the graft, do not peel, pull, or scratch at it.
- **Allow stitches to dissolve:** Let your sutures fall out on their own if they are dissolvable, or attend your scheduled appointment to have them removed.
- **Resume gentle brushing:** After 2 weeks, you may use an ultra-soft manual toothbrush to very gently clean the surface of the healing gums.
- **Never use a water flosser:** Do not use a Waterpik or high-pressure oral irrigator on the graft site for at least 6 to 8 weeks.
- **Expect ongoing bone maturity:** The bone graft takes 3 to 6 months to solidifying and fuse with your natural jawbone before an implant can be placed.

What to Avoid

- **No smoking or vaping:** Do not smoke or vape for at least 14 days. Nicotine constricts blood vessels and causes the bone graft to fail.
- **No strenuous exercise:** Avoid heavy lifting, cardio, or intense workouts for 3 to 5 days to prevent your blood pressure from spiking and causing bleeding.
- **Do not pull your lip:** Avoid pulling your lip or cheek out to look at the socket, as this puts tension on the stitches and can tear the wound open.

When to Call the Doctor

- **Massive loss of graft material:** Call our office if the entire graft site appears empty or if large clumps of material fall out at once.
- **Uncontrollable bleeding:** Contact the office if bright red blood continues to flow freely after biting on gauze for several hours.
- **Foul taste or odor:** Seek evaluation if you notice a severe bad taste, yellow pus draining from the socket, or a sudden fever.
- **Increasing pain or swelling:** Call if your pain or swelling gets significantly worse after the third day.