

# Surgically Assisted Rapid Palatal Expansion Post-Operative Instructions

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## What are my post-operative instructions?

Oral hygiene is very important while your expander is in place. Keeping your mouth and teeth clean will help you heal better and reduce the chances of developing infections or cavities.

After each meal, snack and at bedtime, brush your teeth with a soft bristled toothbrush (child size works well). Use a circular motion and angle the brush at 45 degrees toward the gum line. Use an oral water pik only if ordered by your surgeon.

A moistened Q-tip or cotton swab may be used to wipe over the gums and tooth surfaces when brushing is impossible. You may follow brushing with a mild fluoride mouthwash to leave your breath and tongue feeling refreshed. Avoid use of products such as lemon glycerin swabs and commercial mouthwashes containing alcohol (these products can have a drying or irritating effect on the mucous membranes in the mouth, as well as a burning sensation at the incision line).

As the incision line(s) are repaired with dissolvable sutures (stitches), they will feel like a large hairs but will fallout (knot dissolves) in five to seven days, or up to 2 weeks if longer lasting sutures are used.

Rinse your mouth with a solution of warm salt water (1 teaspoon salt in one 8 ounce glass of water). Oral rinsing should be done after every meal and at bed time. If Peridex is ordered, please wait 30 minutes after using to eat.

Avoid blowing or sucking activities, such as blowing your nose or using a straw. The healing tissue between the sinus and the mouth is easily disturbed by changes in pressure. You can sniff or wipe your nose, but no blowing. If you have to sneeze, keep your mouth wide open, and do not pinch your nose, for first TWO weeks post-surgery.

For protruding wires that are irritating in the mouth, warmed bees wax or orthodontic wax may be applied to the end of the wires. Be sure to remove wax before eating and brushing teeth.

Avoid dry cracked lips by using Aquaphor, Blistex, Carmex, Vitamin E or Vaseline as needed.

### **What should my activity level be?**

- Do not participate in sports or strenuous activities (includes swimming and activities that require helmets) or return to work until permitted by your surgeon.
- Return to work (not requiring high physical activity) could be in one week.
- Driving any motorized machinery or vehicle, or signing any legal documents while taking pain medications are not recommended. The pain medications may cause alterations of visual perception and impair judgment.
- For comfort, and to reduce swelling, you may wish to sleep with your head elevated on two pillows for the first three to five days. You may have moderate swelling which will gradually subside, with or without bruising.
- Ice packs for the first 24 hours following surgery will help to decrease the swelling. You may apply warm wet wash cloths or heating pad on low setting to your face to help alleviate discomfort and swelling after the

first day following surgery.

- A side effect of the anesthetic medications in combination with possible pain medication post-surgery can lead to constipation. This can be alleviated by getting out of bed, adequate fluid intake, and increased fiber.

### **Are there diet restrictions after surgery?**

- Do not smoke Smoking also dries and irritates oral mucosa. The University has a wonderful assistance program Tobacco Cessation; please contact for support at the options listed below:  
email: [quitsmoking@med.umich.edu](mailto:quitsmoking@med.umich.edu)  
Phone: 734-998-6222 (99 T-OBAC)  
<http://hr.umich.edu/mhealthy/programs/tobacco/consultation/index.html>
- Avoid alcohol which can cause nausea and dehydration and should not be mixed with pain medications or antibiotic (if ordered).
- You can reduce the risk of dehydration and keep secretions thin by drinking at least ten-8 ounce glasses of fluids a day.
- No straws for the first two weeks.
- A humidifier may be used for inspired air if recommended, no CPAP for two weeks.
- Follow a high protein, High calorie blenderized liquid diet, for the first two weeks.
- Avoid seedy or salty foods until the sutures fall out.
- Calorie and protein supplements can be used and are encouraged. Products such as Ensure, Carnation and Boost are recommended. Protein powders are also an option. Protein powders can be purchased at GNC and most supermarkets.
- Increased protein intake after surgery is vital for maintaining the body's protective systems and for building healthy new tissue.
- You may lose between five and ten pounds during the first few weeks as

your body adjusts to the diet change.

- You may eat anything blenderized that has a pourable consistency. Our department also provides a soft diet recipe book, please let us know if you desire a book.
- Remember snacking. A soft diet (pancakes, waffles, well steamed vegetables, soft meat like Fish) should be followed till you are done “turning” the key to expand the palate. This can be up to a six week process.

### **How do I manage pain after surgery?**

Fill the prescriptions you have been given and diligently follow the instructions on the labels. These prescriptions could include pain relief medication, an antibiotic, a nasal decongestant, an oral decongestant and may or may not include Peridex or other antimicrobial mouthwash.

### **What follow-up care will I receive?**

Your first return appointment will be within two weeks following your surgery. This date and time will be given to you at the time of discharge from the hospital, or you will be contacted for a follow up. Follow-up appointments will be determined by your surgeon, in conjunction with your Orthodontic care.

### **When should I call my doctor?**

- If you are unable to adjust the expander or lose the key, please contact your orthodontist.
- If you have increased swelling, bruising or tenderness in your upper jaw or mid-facial areas, after removal recovery period.
- If you have severe or increased pain not relieved by medication.
- If you have any side effects to medications; such as, rash, nausea, headache, vomiting, increased irritability, or constipation.
- If you have an oral temperature over 100.5 degrees. Check to make sure they are getting enough liquids. Dehydration can cause the body

temperature to rise.

### **Who should I call if I have questions?**

- (734) 936-5950, Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
- Urgent issues after hours and on weekends, call Hospital Paging at (734) 936-6267 and ask for the Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeon on call.

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