

Maxillary Prosthesis (Obturator) Care Instructions

What is a maxillectomy?

A maxillectomy/ palatotomy is a surgical procedure removing all or part of the hard or soft palate. The resulting defect makes swallowing, speaking, chewing, and the use of regular denture appliances almost impossible.

What is a maxillary prosthesis?

A maxillectomy/ palatotomy prosthesis or "obturator" restores the site after surgery and aids in the function of speaking, chewing, and/or swallowing. It fills the void left by the surgery and artificially replaces loss of tissues and teeth.

Prosthetic treatment involves:

- Patient counseling and instruction
- Physical therapy (oral - physical)
- Dietary counseling
- Hygiene maintenance and instruction
- Fabrication of prosthetic appliances

Fabrication of obturators is usually done in three phases:

- Immediate/surgical -This is the surgical prosthesis it will be placed at the time of surgery and is secured in place by either wires or small screws. It will remain in place until your 1st post op visit with the prosthodontist.
- Transitional/interim - this phase is started as early as 10-14 days after surgery when surgical dressings or the immediate prosthesis is removed.

The transitional prosthesis is placed and modified until healing is

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complete. This phase may extend from 2-24 months.

- Final/definitive - this phase begins when healing is complete and involves fabrication of prosthesis intended for long term use. The natural teeth adjacent to the prosthesis must be healthy before proceeding. Definitive treatment may involve fixed prosthesis (crowns) and / or a removable prosthesis.

Any phase of treatment may be altered dependent on the nature of the disease and its staging, radiation, chemotherapy, complications, and the morbidity of the disease.

Obturator Care

- Clean the obturator after meals and at bedtime. Use soap and water or denture paste on a brush to remove plaque. Stains can be removed with commercial denture soaking agents.
- Clean the obturator over 4-5 inches of water in a basin or sink to avoid damage to the obturator should it drop.
- Remove the prosthesis at night and place it in a container of water. (Please note, that **the surgical obturator is not to be removed**).

Who should I call if I have questions?

- Call Hospital Dentistry at (734) 936-5950, Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
- After hours and on weekends, call Hospital Paging at (734) 936-6267 and ask for the dentistry resident on call if your question or concern is of an urgent nature.

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Editor: Stephanie Munz DDS

Reviewer: Jillian Rigert, DMD, MD

Plain Language Reviewer: Ruti Volk, MSI, AHIP

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