

Post-Operative Instructions: TMJ Treatment

- A small bandage may be placed over your surgical site. This should remain in place for 1–2 days following your surgery. A small amount of blood may be noted on the bandage. This is normal. The bandage may be removed once there is no further bleeding.
- Apply antibiotic ointment to the area twice a day. It is OK to shower and shampoo starting the next day.
- Your head should be kept elevated (more than 30 degrees or two pillows). This is especially important while sleeping or resting, for at least the first 24 hours.
- You should not experience any bleeding after removing the bandage. If you do experience bleeding, apply pressure for 10 minutes. If the bleeding does not stop, please call the office.
- Some bruising and swelling is expected in the surgical site. Ice packs can be applied (20 minutes on and 20 minutes off) for the next 48 hours. Be careful not to harm or freeze the skin, especially while it is still numb.
- If you are prescribed pain or antibiotic medication, it is important that you take the medications as instructed.
- For 2–6 weeks following surgery, your diet should consist of a soft diet, as chewing may disrupt the joint and can cause problems. The diet does not need to be limited to liquids, but the consistency should be that of cottage cheese, pasta, egg salad, and other soft foods that do not require heavy chewing.
- On the third day following your surgery, you should begin careful jaw exercises. These are stretching exercises to help reduce stiffness in the joint associated with the surgery. This should be performed at least 10 times per day for a minimum of 10 days.
- Careful stretching and gentle range-of-motion exercises are very important in your recovery. You should open your jaw as wide as you can and hold it in place. The first week, you should be able to open enough to get two fingers in between your upper and lower teeth.
- By the second week after surgery, you should be opening wide enough to fit three fingers between your upper and lower teeth. This can be achieved by gentle stretching of the jaw with your fingers, or by using the tongue blades (if the doctor determines it is necessary).
- It will be beneficial to schedule appointments with a physical therapist. The particular regimen for physical therapy will be discussed at your post-operative visit.
- If you wore a splint before your surgery, you may place the splint back in your mouth following surgery. You may continue to wear the splint as you had before the surgery.
- Avoid bending over, heavy lifting, or activities that cause increased pressure in the head region.