



## **PRE-OPERATIVE INFORMATION: FREE GINGIVAL GRAFT**

### **What is a free gingival graft?**

A free gingival graft is used to re-enforce the gum seal around the teeth. This is to prevent bacteria from traveling down the root surface, destroying gum and bone and leading to eventual tooth loss. A free gingival graft does not cover exposed root surfaces.

### **How do we do the surgery?**

The surgery is done painlessly with local anesthetic. I.V. sedation is available for complete patient comfort. A small piece of tissue is taken from the roof of the mouth and attached to the affected area. This means that there are two surgical sites (roof of mouth and affected area). Pink dressings are placed over the two surgical sites. The dressings will remain in place for 1-5 days. The surgery takes about 30 minutes.

### **What happens after surgery?**

A soft diet is recommended and you will be prescribed suitable pain medication. You will be seen one week after the surgery to check healing, to remove any remaining dressing and to be given oral hygiene instruction. You will then be seen in 3-4 weeks to once again monitor healing. In six weeks, the site should be sufficiently healed for the continuation of your normal oral hygiene regime.

There is more information about this procedure on our website at [www.drcaudry.ca](http://www.drcaudry.ca)



## **POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS: FREE GINGIVAL GRAFT**

**What to expect:** Sometimes a pink dressing is placed over the graft site which should remain in place for a minimum of three days. There may also be a dressing on the roof of your mouth, which you can expect to fall off on the first day. To assist initial healing and to prevent graft movement, try to rest and avoid talking and eating for the first 3-5 hrs. A soft diet is recommended for the first week.

**Discomfort:** Pain relief medication will be prescribed. Ibuprofen (600 mg) every 4-6 hours and extra strength Tylenol are usually sufficient. In some cases, Percocet is prescribed. This is a very strong painkiller and we suggest that you only take this before retiring.

**Swelling:** to avoid swelling, use a cold pack (ice or frozen vegetables) on the side of the face 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off for the first 12 hours following surgery. Swelling peaks in 72 hours and you should use ice as much as possible during this timeframe.

**Bleeding:** It is not unusual to have some slight bleeding. If the site continues to bleed, try to relax and gently rinse your mouth with ice-cold water. Press firmly on the bleeding site with a piece of moistened gauze (or a moistened tea bag) sustaining constant pressure for twenty minutes. Bleeding can be avoided by keeping your head elevated during the first evening, discontinuing your usual exercise regime for 1-2 days, restricting yourself to a soft diet and by not smoking, which also delays healing and irritates tissues.

**Oral Hygiene:** After surgery, it is important to keep your teeth and mouth as clean as possible. The prescribed antibacterial rinse is to be used twice a day starting the day after surgery. Additionally, warm salt-water rinses (1/2 tsp. salt in a glass of warm water) can be used several times a day. During the first week, the non-treated areas should be brushed normally.

**Post-operative appointments:** You will be seen for two post-operative appointments. The first will be one week after the surgery. At this appointment, dressings(s), if still in place, will be removed and oral hygiene reviewed. After this appointment it is important not to traumatize the new tissues and we suggest that you use a Q-tip to clean the teeth at the grafted site. Flossing can be started 1-week post-operatively but the floss must not irritate the gums. The second post-operative appointment will be 3-4 weeks following the surgery to check the healing and review oral hygiene. Basic healing will take up to six weeks but complete healing takes one year.

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