

Taking care of yourself after a gum graft procedure (Alloderm)



What to do for the next 24 hours

What you do during the next 24 hours after the procedure is critical. Following these instructions will help ensure a better result, quicker healing, less pain and less swelling. So:

Go home and stay at home. You do not need to be stay in bed, but you do need to take things very easy. You may read, watch TV or work at your desk at home. We need to keep the heart rate down. Avoid holding the mobile phone to your face (use loud speaker), especially on the side with the graft.

You will be numb for the next 3-4 hours. Take a Panadol as soon as you get home, with some soft foods (see below). Do NOT use anything containing aspirin because this thins the blood (and will cause more swelling). Take a Nurofen about 2 hours later and continue the alternate Panadol/Nurofen for the next 24 hours, making sure not to exceed the maximum dose for each medication.

Nourish only with COLD liquids e.g. ice cream, yoghurt, milk, smoothies, milkshakes, meal replacement shakes. Do NOT drink through a straw. Absolutely NO alcohol, smoking, or soft drinks/carbonated drinks. Do NOT skip meals – keeping well hydrated and nourished will help you heal faster. Do NOT eat any foods that require chewing.

Apply ice packs to your face during waking hours (on 10 min, off 10 min), taking care if you are numb. When going to sleep, use a pillow and keep your head slightly elevated compared with the rest of your body. All this will help reduce the swelling you will experience in the next few days.

Do NOT brush or floss your teeth for the next 24 hours only. NO mouth rinses (e.g. Savacol, Listerine) except that prescribed by your dentist (if any).

Finish the antibiotics you started prior to the procedure. If another antibiotic is required, the dentist will let you know.

Expect minimal bleeding, because this is an “internal”/“under-the-gum” procedure. Sometimes the small amount of blood can be mixed with saliva, making it look worse than it is. So swallow the bleeding, rather than rinsing or spitting. Do NOT use gauze packs on the graft site. Contact us if there is excessive bleeding.

What to do for the next week

You will be swollen, possibly bruised, and you may still be in pain. All this should get better on the 3rd day after the procedure. Contact us if it does not – you may need more antibiotics.

You may return to normal daily routine, but avoid strenuous activities (e.g. heavy lifting, exercise programs which increase your heart rate). Continue the ice packs if possible.

Now you can start eating SOFT foods rather than just drinking liquids (e.g. cooked veges, fish, meatloaf, scrambled eggs). Cut foods into small pieces to minimise chewing required.

Resume GENTLY brushing and flossing all the teeth EXCEPT the area that was grafted. Hold your toothbrush like a violin bow, rather than like a baseball bat! You can still use Piksters/interdental brushes in other areas of the mouth, but please do NOT use WaterPik/other irrigation devices and electric toothbrushes). Please do NOT use any mouth rinses except warm salty water.

Use pain medications only when required. Contact us if pain is getting worse rather than better.

Come to your review appointment(s).

Stiches will probably not bother you because they are so thin, and they will be removed by the dentist approximately 8 weeks after the procedure. They will not dissolve by themselves, and do not try to remove them yourself, because they are needed to hold the gum up in the new position until it heals.

Do NOT keep lifting your lip to see how things are healing because this stretches the graft and compromises the result. Any issues, please call Flagsmile Dental 07 5546 9710.