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## **CARE OF THE MOUTH FOLLOWING SOFT TISSUE GRAFT SURGERY (PALATAL DONOR)**

The area where the soft tissue graft was taken is the palate. This is likely to be the most sensitive area following surgery. Since you do not form a scab in the mouth, the area on the palate may appear ulcerated. Don't become concerned, this is normal healing. If you have a palatal retainer, a collagen sponge will be lying across the palatal incision underneath your retainer, throw this away the day after surgery when removing the retainer (likely to be red and spongy).

The most common problem associated with the palate is bleeding. The slightest trauma during eating, etc. may start profuse bleeding. DON'T PANIC, apply enough pressure with a damp 2x2 inch sterile sponge to cut off circulation. Keep applying this pressure for a minimum of 10-15 minutes. If you are wearing a plastic stent to cover the palate, put that in and apply pressure on the stent to stop the bleeding. If this does not help, try biting down on a saturated tea bag to help stop the bleeding. This type of bleeding may occur from time to time for up to a week after the surgery.

It is also very important not to disturb the graft site during the first few weeks of healing. Keep ice over the grafted site, 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off, during the first day of surgery. This will reduce swelling. It is normal to have swelling, as well as some bruising, over the area where the graft sites were done. The day after surgery is the time to begin using the Peridex rinse that was prescribed. Do not use a toothbrush at or on the grafted site during the first four weeks after surgery. Do not disturb nor try to brush around the stitches where the graft was placed. Do not attempt to look at your graft by pulling your lips up or down. The more the lips and tissue are manipulated, the higher chance the stitches could pull loose resulting in failure of the graft.

Smoking affects the circulation of the graft and may cause the graft to slough or die resulting in recession. It is very important that you cut back or stop any smoking during the healing phase of the surgery. Ideally, you should not smoke for three weeks following any soft tissue graft surgery. When smoking resumes, take light drags on the cigarette.

Any additional questions, please call our office at 972-394-1234 for a detailed explanation.

