

Your Oral Maxillofacial Procedure

Care at home after your procedure

This handout includes instructions for after your oral maxillofacial procedure. Please carefully follow these instructions to ensure you heal safely from your procedure.

Preparations Before Your Procedure

- You will need to prepare to make a liquid diet after your procedure. You may need to buy a blender to have at home and stock up on certain foods. The clinic will give you a handout with instructions for making your liquid diet.
- You **must** plan to have a responsible adult drive you home from the hospital. They must come with you to your procedure appointment. You **cannot** take yourself home from the hospital after this procedure.

After Your Procedure

Oral Hygiene

Good oral hygiene is always essential. After surgery, it is especially important because it reduces the risk of complications, infection, and the need for further care.

- Gently and thoroughly brush your teeth, arch bars, and/or braces with a soft toothbrush and toothpaste.
- Use salt water rinses and chlorhexidine as prescribed (see page 4 for instructions).
- Do not floss until your follow-up appointment. This includes flossing with both regular floss and water flossers.

Special Instructions

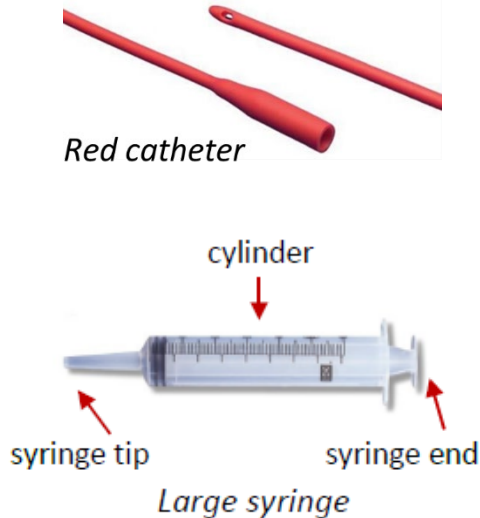
Your provider will check the boxes below to let you know what instructions to follow at home after your procedure. Please follow all the instructions carefully.

Red Catheter and Large Syringe

The catheter can help deliver small amounts of liquid if it is difficult for you to swallow after surgery. The tip of the syringe fits into the wide end of the catheter. You can take your liquid diet, hydration, and

medications through the catheter until you are able to eat and drink normally.

How to use the red catheter and syringe:



1. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water.
2. Gather supplies: Syringe, catheter, medications, and/or your liquid diet.
3. Sit as upright as you can. If needed, prop yourself up with pillows. This will allow you to swallow and digest comfortably.
4. Gently move the narrow tip of the catheter around in your mouth to find the most comfortable place. Make sure you do not feel a choking sensation. Avoid any hardware, splints, or elastics in your mouth. This is the place where you will put your liquid diet or medications. Take the catheter out of your mouth.
5. Press the end of the syringe all the way into the cylinder.
6. Attach the tip of the syringe to the wide opening of the catheter.
7. Place the narrow tip of the catheter into the liquid. Pull the end of the syringe out to draw a small amount of liquid into the cylinder. Do not pull the end of the syringe all the way out of the cylinder.
8. Place the narrow tip of the catheter where it fits comfortably in your mouth.
9. Slowly press the end of the syringe back into the cylinder to squeeze liquid into your mouth. Make sure you do not put too much liquid in your mouth. You should be able to swallow comfortably. Swallow completely.
10. Rinse and dry the syringe and catheter. Store these in a dry and clean place between uses.

Sinus Precautions

- Do **not** blow your nose for at least 2 weeks. Gently wipe it instead.
- Avoid bearing down to have bowel movements.
- Do **not** forcibly spit for one week.
- Do **not** smoke or use smokeless tobacco. Smoking disrupts the healing process, especially in the sinuses.
- Sneeze with your mouth open. If you have the urge to sneeze, do not sneeze through your nose. Avoid pinching your nostrils.
- Do **not** drink through a straw for 1 week.

- Do **not** swim or submerge your face in water for 1 month.
- Do **not** do any strenuous exercise (such as running, biking, or lifting more than 10 pounds) for 1 week.
- **Gently** swish salt water in your mouth after every meal and snack for 1 week (see “Mouth Rinses” below).
- Do **not** do any sinus rinses (such as a Neti-Pot).
- Slight bleeding from the nose is common and may occur for several days after surgery.

Dental Wax Use

Using dental wax can help prevent discomfort caused by any rough wires or braces in your mouth. How to use dental wax:

1. Wash your hands and brush your teeth. This reduces the risk of bacteria.
2. Pull off a small piece of wax from the pack. Use your fingers to roll it into a ball for at least 10 seconds to warm the wax. The ball should be about the size of a popcorn kernel. Using too much wax may cause it to fall off.
3. Locate any painful areas in your mouth. Find any sharp or rough metal that is causing irritation to those areas. This may include braces, brackets, or wires poking far back in your mouth.
4. Dry off the sharp or rough metal with a tissue. The drier the area, the longer the wax will stick.
5. Use your thumb or forefinger to press the ball of wax over the bracket or wire causing your pain.
6. The wax barrier should stop the irritation and give your mouth time to heal any sore spots. Change the wax daily when doing your oral hygiene routine.

Ice and Warm Packs

- Ice your face for 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off to reduce swelling and discomfort. Place a paper towel or thin cloth between your skin and the ice pack to protect your skin.
- After 3 days, switch to using warm packs. Use them in the same way you used the ice packs to aid healing.

Mouth Rinses

- Please be careful when brushing around the surgical site. Use a soft toothbrush to brush very gently for the first 2 weeks.
- Brush and floss all other areas as you normally would.

- Avoid commercial mouthwashes. They contain alcohol that may irritate the surgical site.
- **Chlorohexidine mouth rinse** is a prescription rinse that decreases bacteria in your mouth (*antiseptic*). How to use:
 - Swish a small amount in your mouth every 12 hours.
 - Do not eat or drink for 30 minutes after. The rinse may make food taste bitter.
 - If the rinse causes your teeth to turn brown, tell your hygienist.
- **Salt water rinses** also help your mouth recover from surgery, as they help kill bacteria. A salt water rinse will not irritate your mucous membranes like mouth washes can.

How to make and use a salt water rinse:

- Mix 1/2 teaspoon of salt in 1 cup (8 ounces) of warm water until the salt dissolves. Make sure the water is not too hot.
- Rinse your mouth gently with the warm salt water solution using the “tilt and drool” method your provider taught you. “Tilt” to let gravity swish the solution and “drool” to let it fall out of your mouth.
- **Do this rinse after every meal and snack.** The salt water will remove bits of food from the surgical site.
- You may have been sent home with a bottle of saline. Use the entire bottle, then wash and refill the bottle with 1 tablespoon of salt and 500 mL of water. Do this each time you use the bottle.

Monojet Syringe (curved-tip syringe)

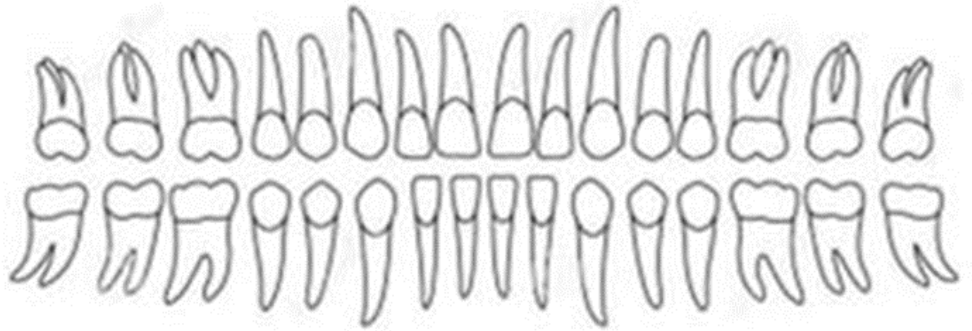
- The date on the syringe is the day it was packaged, and is **not** the expiration date. The syringe expires 1 year from the package date.
- Use the syringe to gently rinse food particles from places where they may get caught in your mouth.
- Do not use with a lot of force, as that may dislodge sutures or blood clots.

Post-Surgical Elastics

Elastics are tiny rubber bands that help move your teeth in a way that arch bars or braces cannot. Elastics help your upper and lower teeth fit together better. They will also help “train” your muscles to adjust to

your new bite. It is very important that you follow these instructions for wearing elastics:

4. Wear your elastics 24 hours a day, including when you sleep.
5. If your provider says it is okay to remove or change the elastics, please do so as instructed for meals and oral hygiene **only**. Use the instructions your provider gave you to put the elastics back in place after eating and hygiene.
6. Please refer to the diagram below that shows you where you should place the elastic bands.



7. Remain on a liquid, “no chew” diet, unless instructed otherwise.
8. Excellent oral hygiene is necessary. Please refer to page 1 of this handout for oral hygiene instructions.

It may take you a few days to get used to wearing elastics. Your mouth will be sore, or you might have a slight headache. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil) may help with discomfort.

Elastics can break and you might feel one snap in your mouth. Be sure to always keep a bag of elastics with you so you can replace them if one breaks. If you feel uncomfortable or unsure about replacing them, please contact our office to speak with a provider. Occasionally, you may even swallow one - this is not a problem.

The success of your treatment depends on you following these instructions.

After General Anesthesia

- Do not drive a car, operate machinery or power tools, or make legal decisions.
- Do not drink any alcoholic beverages, including beer.
- Do not engage in any moderate to strenuous physical activity (such as running, biking, or lifting more than 10 pounds).

When to Call

Contact our clinic or your doctor if you have:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Difficulty swallowing
- Drowsiness that is getting worse
- Bleeding that is hard to control or comes in spurts
- Itching, a rash, or other symptoms that may be due to an allergic reaction to your medication(s)
- Pain that is severe (8 out of 10 on the pain scale) or cannot be controlled with pain medication(s)
- Chills or a fever over 100.4°F (38°C)

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Harborview Oral and Maxillofacial Clinic: For clinical questions, call 206.744.3586 weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

For questions about scheduling or other concerns, call 206.744.3189.

After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206.744.3000 and ask to page the Oral Surgery Resident on call.