



**1830 14th Avenue South
Birmingham, Alabama 35205**

CARE OF THE MOUTH FOLLOWING A SOFT TISSUE GRAFT

- The roof of your mouth (the palate) will probably give you the most problem. This is the area where the graft was taken. Since you do not form a “scab” in the mouth, this area may appear ulcerated. Don’t be concerned, this is normal healing.
- The most common complication is bleeding. The slightest trauma during eating, etc. may start steady bleeding. **DON’T PANIC!** Apply firm, continuous pressure to the area of bleeding with a clean, damp piece of gauze for at least ten minutes. If you don’t have any gauze, you can use a moist tea bag or washcloth.
- The bleeding may occur from time to time up to a week after surgery, especially if you are not careful with your diet. We recommend a liquid or puree-consistency diet for several days after surgery. Blending food in a blender is a good option prior to eating. Avoid crusty or hard foods. Nutrition is very important during healing, so try to eat a high protein diet. We recommend taking a good multi-vitamin such as Centrum and extra vitamin C.
- The palate will be much more comfortable if you avoid sugar, salt, spicy, and acid foods.
- Smoking appears to affect the circulation of the graft, and may cause failure of the procedure. It is very important that you stop smoking during the healing phase.
- If dressing was placed over the roof of your mouth or over the grafted site, be careful not to dislodge it. Within a few days or hours, this dressing may loosen and fall off on its own-this should not concern you.
- Ice should be applied over the grafted site by holding an ice pack to the outside of your face at 20 minute intervals for several hours after surgery. Ice packs can be continued periodically over the next few days as well. The ice will help to decrease post-operative swelling, and its application is very important.
- Begin brushing the rest of your mouth the day after surgery, but avoid brushing the grafted area until you return to our office. You can keep the grafted area clean by swabbing gently with a Q-Tip that has been dipped in your prescription mouth rinse. Swab the area gently for a couple minutes, repeatedly dipping the Q-Tip, two to three times a day. Warm salt-water rinses may be performed as well.
- Generally, your dissolvable sutures will begin breaking down and will fall out on their own over the first week. Some may come out earlier, and this should not be a problem. We will remove any remaining sutures and any non-dissolving sutures at your follow-up visits..
- **SMOKING AND PREMATURE BRUSHING ARE MAJOR FACTORS IN GRAFT FAILURE.**

In case of true medical emergencies that cannot be handled during regular office hours, Dr. Duckett can be reached at: (205) 968-4047 or (205) 999-4465.