

Instructions For Our Surgical Patients

Congratulations! You've decided to do something very special for yourself. You're going to have corrective jaw surgery. Perhaps you have waited several years to have the surgery or have been waiting just until you're old enough. Now you've been through several months of orthodontics and the time for surgery is drawing near.

This is a very exciting time and there are many things you can do to have a successful experience. By far, the most important is to develop and maintain a positive attitude. Certainly, you have some anxieties now but you will find that the new you will be worth it all! It is very important to understand the reasons for which surgery is necessary. Ask any and all questions that you have.

Understanding what is going to happen to you will make surgery and recovery much easier. It is also important to talk to several people who have already had your type of surgery. We understand that you have some anxiety, because after all, we've been where you are now! Taking excellent care of your body is always a good idea but before your surgery, it is especially important. You need to begin an aerobic exercise program about two months before your surgery is planned. Aerobic exercise such as swimming, jogging or bicycling will strengthen your heart and lungs and make surgery and recovery much easier for you. A good diet is also essential. Eat lots of fruits and vegetables and cut back on sugar, soft drinks and caffeine. Now is the perfect time to quit smoking. If you do smoke, try to cut back several weeks before surgery so that your lungs will be in top shape. Rest is also important. You'll have a lot to do to get ready for the hospital, but remember to get enough rest and sleep.

Your pre-admission testing will be done the day prior to surgery. Your first stop will be the admitting desk where your paperwork will be completed. From there, you will be taken to the anesthesiologist's office.

The doctor will discuss your medical history with you and will explain what will happen to you in the operating room and recovery room. Again, be sure to ask any questions you may have. Finally, blood will be taken for any laboratory tests that are needed. A urine specimen will also be taken. An EKG and chest x-ray may be ordered for you if the doctor feels these are necessary. Afterwards, you will be free to go home. (You will be required to return early the next morning for admission). The night before surgery, it is recommended that you drink extra fluids, mostly juices and water, since you can have nothing to drink after midnight. You should also get plenty of rest. The morning of surgery, you will need to be at the hospital by approximately 6:00a.m. Before you arrive, you need to shower, and remove all jewelry, make-up, contact lens, hairpins, and all nail polish. Upon your arrival at the hospital, you will remove all clothing and put on a hospital gown. Now is the perfect time to brush your teeth better than they have ever been brushed before! About an hour before your surgery, you will be given an injection in the hip. This will help prepare you for surgery by relaxing you and

making you drowsy. An intravenous needle will be placed in your arm through which you will be given two medications. One medication is to decrease swelling and the other is an antibiotic.

Shortly after you receive these medications you will be taken to the operating room on a stretcher. A nurse will greet you, ask you several questions and review your chart. You'll soon be taken to the operating room that has been prepared for you. Although, drowsy, you can see that this is quite a busy time. The nurse anesthetist, who will be putting you to sleep, will be caring for you now. You will have monitors applied to your chest to measure your heart rate as well as clothes pin- type apparatus placed on one finger to continually measure the amount of oxygen in your blood while you are asleep.

When it is time for your surgery to begin, you will be given medications through the IV in your arm and will immediately go to sleep. After you're asleep, the anesthetist will put a tube (called a naso-gastric tube) through your nose and into your stomach. This tube will keep your stomach empty of any blood or drainage. You will also have a breathing tube (called a tracheal tube) put down your nose and into your windpipe to help you breathe properly while asleep.

Although your surgery may take several hours, it will seem that immediately after being put to sleep, you will be waking up in the recovery room. The entire time you spend there will seem strange- like the twilight zone. You will drift in and out of sleep. Ice packs will be placed around your head. You will be most aware of a sore throat caused by the tubes, but they will be removed in the recovery room and you will not remember much about them. The recovery room nurse will stay with you and will frequently check your blood pressure and pulse. She will also ask you questions to determine how well you are waking up. Even if you can't talk well, you will be awake enough to nod your head. Certainly, you're wondering about pain. You will probably experience much less pain than you expect, but the nurse will give you pain medication if you need it. When the nurse is sure you are awake, you'll be returned to your room, where your blood pressure and pulse will continue to be monitored. You will probably be drowsy most of the day and night and even continue to sleep soundly throughout the night.

The day following surgery will be busy. If you were groggy most of the day of surgery, the next morning will be the first time you see yourself in the mirror. Although your face is swollen, you will be very pleased with the new you! One of the most important things you can do after surgery is to try to drink well. The feeding tube will be very helpful, because your face and lips will be both swollen and numb.

You'll find that it is difficult to take very much at a time, but easier to sip along on juice and water throughout the day. You will be given a milkshake during the morning and afternoon and at night. These are filling and taste good. It is important to wear your ice pack as it not only helps keep swelling down, but feels

good too. You will be asked to walk around the hall, but will also be encouraged to rest and sleep, also. It is a good idea to remind friends and family that you will need to rest while in the hospital so that they can keep their visits short. Brushing your teeth after surgery is difficult because of the swelling, but it is very important. It is difficult to determine how clearly you will speak after surgery, depending on the extent of your surgery and amount of swelling. But remember, if you can't speak well after surgery, you can communicate by writing.

Taking care of yourself after surgery

It is probably hard to believe, but the eight week period of recovery from surgery passes very quickly. You will notice a daily change in your face as the swelling decreases. There are several things you can do to help your body recover. It is important to have a proper balance of rest and activity. You will find that you have very little energy at first. Rest periods and even naps are essential during the first week after surgery. It is just as important to maintain some physical activity. Be sure that you don't do any heavy lifting or strenuous exercise as this could easily damage your jaws. Walking is great exercise and it helps restore your strength.

Taking the very best care of your mouth and teeth is crucial after surgery. Although difficult at first, brushing becomes easier within one or two weeks. Mouthwash helps to clean those areas that are difficult to brush. No doubt you are wondering how you can survive without chewing for eight weeks. At first, you will have to drink very thin liquids. Breakfast cereals (cream of wheat, oatmeal, grits) can be blended and thinned.

These are both nutritious and filling. Dietary supplements (instant breakfast, Ensure, Isocat) also taste good and provide many nutrients. Soups, juices, and milkshakes provide variety. You will find that it is fun to experiment with your favorite foods in a liquid form. Mashed potatoes will become one of your best friends. Blenderized spaghetti? It's great! Even some baby foods taste good. Certainly, maintaining a balanced and sufficient diet is the most important thing you can do to ensure a rapid recovery.