

Alveolar Bone Graft Repair

Post-Operative Patient Instructions

Dr. Albert Woo: 401-444-2299

If your child's cleft affects the alveolus (the bone in the gum where the teeth sit), they will probably need surgery to fill the gap in the gumline. This helps their adult teeth come through properly. A 'bone graft' involves borrowing a bit of bone from the hip to help repair the space in the alveolus.

Feeding

Your child's mouth and hip are repaired with dissolving stitches but the repair is delicate for several weeks after surgery. For the repair to heal well, **avoid sticky foods such as peanut butter and any hard foods for up to three weeks.**

- Rinse the mouth with Peridex rinse or salt water ($\frac{1}{2}$ measuring teaspoon in 8 ounces of warm water), at least 4 times a day, and after any oral intake. Swish and spit, do not swallow. The Peridex should not be used for more than one week.
- **Do not allow your child to put anything hard in the mouth.**
This could damage the stitches.
- Do not feed your child hard foods, such as toast, nuts, potato chips, bread sticks, pretzels, or hard candy. Hard foods could damage the repair.

Your child's diet after surgery will progress as follows:

- **Day of surgery: Liquids.** Some examples are apple juice, water, Jell-O, cranberry juice, popsicles (taken off the stick), or clear broth.
- **For the next 3 weeks: Thick liquids and soft foods.** Examples include milk, yogurt, thin cooked cereals, puddings, ice cream, creamed soups, thinned pureed foods, mashed potatoes, cereal soaked in milk, boiled vegetables, finely ground meats, well-cooked pasta, bananas, or canned fruits. **A general rule is that the food should be easily smashed between two fingers.**

Wound Care

Your child's mouth and hip have been sutured with absorbable stitches.

Your child may have a plastic splint wired to the teeth. If so, this is typically removed 3-4 weeks after the bone graft.

- **Oral hygiene is important.** In the first week after surgery, rinse his/her mouth 4 times a day and after any oral intake. Starting one week after surgery, teeth can be gently brushed with a soft toothbrush, making sure to avoid the suture lines.
- Steri-strips have been applied to your child's hip. They can get wet in a shower (not a bath) and be patted dry. They will fall off on their own usually 2-3 weeks after surgery.

Activity

Your child may be uncomfortable walking for several days after surgery.

He/she should be encouraged to at least get out of bed several times a day.

This discomfort should improve significantly within the first week of surgery.

Typically, children are able to return to school a week or so after surgery.

Pain Control

If your child has more than mild discomfort, the doctor may prescribe additional medicine to help ease the pain. Give pain medicine as prescribed and instructed by your doctor.

- Try to schedule a dose of pain medicine around bedtime, especially for the first few days at home. This may help your child sleep better.
- Keep track of your child's bowel habits. He or she should return to usual bowel habits after surgery. If your child does not have a bowel movement every day, he or she may be constipated.
- Prune juice or over-the-counter laxatives may be helpful. Call your child's doctor or nurse if you think your child is constipated.

Emotional Recovery

After a bone graft your child may be tired or irritable. Healing for each child is different. It is important for your child to rest. In time your child will return to his/her usual activities.

Follow-up

- Your child will need to return for a follow up visit in 3 weeks. **Call Dr. Woo's office at 401-444-2299** to schedule a follow up appointment.
- Your child's orthodontist will also want to see you in follow-up, please call their office to arrange an appointment a few weeks following surgery.

When to Call Your Child's Doctor

Call Dr. Woo's office if your child:

- Has a fever over 101.5°F degrees;
- Has bleeding from the mouth;
- Has foul smelling odor or drainage;
- Has pain that doesn't go away after giving medicine for pain; or
- vomits or is not drinking liquids.