

COMMON QUESTIONS AFTER JAW SURGERY

WILL I HAVE PAIN?

Yes, people have described the pain as sore, achy, throbbing, or burning. The pain usually lasts 3-4 days, sometimes longer. Most people are comfortable on pain pills or liquid like Codeine or Vicodin.

HOW CAN I TAKE MEDICINE WHEN I CANNOT OPEN MY JAWS?

Many medicines come in liquid form. Any medication you need that does not come in liquid form may be crushed or dissolved. Your nurse will review all your medications with you prior to your discharge.

HOW CAN I KEEP MY MOUTH AND TEETH CLEAN?

A clean mouth is very important for healing and comfort. With a little extra work you will find it easy to maintain. By using a child's toothbrush followed by irrigation of the mouth, most of the food debris can be cleaned off the wires.

WHAT CAN I EAT?

It is **VERY** important that you stay well nourished while your jaw is healing. Please review the dietary booklet before surgery for helpful hints. Remember adequate liquids and nutrition are important for healing. Weighing yourself twice a week can help to see if you are getting adequate nutrition.

HOW CAN I TALK?

You don't need to move your jaw for talking. The lips and tongue will function normally. After the first few days talking becomes easier.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO REMOVE THE WIRES OR ELASTICS IF I CHOKE OR VOMIT?

Yes, it is possible but rarely necessary to remove the wire or elastics under such conditions. If you should vomit, tilting your head forward usually prevents choking. Remember, before surgery, your stomach is empty. After surgery you will only have liquids, which passes through the bands or wires. Please remember to avoid any foods or alcohol that may cause you to vomit.

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF I CUT THE WIRES OR ELASTICS BEFORE THE PROPER TIME?

Dr. Karas does not want your jaw position to move after surgery. If you remove your bands or wires before the time necessary for healing of your jaw, it may ruin the repair. You might need more surgery to correct the damage later. Please call the office right away to make arrangements to be seen if this happens.

WHY IS MY LIP NUMB?

During surgery, the nerves that control feeling in your lips and gums may be bruised, causing a certain degree of numbness. This usually will go away, but may take months after surgery to get better, and in some circumstances be permanent. Be careful drinking hot liquids or foods as you may not be able to feel the hot liquid.

SHOULD I TAKE DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS?

A well balanced and carefully planned diet makes dietary supplements unnecessary. The dietary booklet will review this in detail. Please let your doctor know if you are allergic to or cannot eat certain foods.

WILL I LOSE WEIGHT?

Many people lose 7 to 10 pounds after this type of surgery. Losing more than 12 pounds probably means that you are not getting enough calories and won't help the area heal. It is important to maintain proper intake of calories and protein to prevent weight loss and to help healing.

WHEN CAN I RETURN TO WORK?

This will vary from person to person and will depend on the exact type of surgery. Most people need a full 2 weeks of recovery before going to work or school.

HOW SOON CAN I RUN OR EXERCISE AFTER SURGERY?

It will take about 6 to 8 weeks before the jaw heals enough so that it won't shift if you fall or hit yourself. During this period please refrain from any contact sports or activities that would put you at risk for injury. It will take 3 to 6 months for your jaw to reach its normal strength. If a bone graft is taken, this period of limited activity will be longer. Dr. Karas can discuss with you when to begin certain exercises.

WHEN WILL THE ELASTICS OR WIRES COME OFF?

The duration that these devices stay on depends on the type of osteotomy or fracture. In general, patients having the vertical ramus osteotomy of the mandible will have a 2-3 week period of jaw wiring. Most patients that have the sagittal advancement of the mandible or maxillary surgery will not have the jaw wired, but they will be in elastics from 4-6 weeks after surgery.

Patient Signature: _____ Date: _____