



Post-Operative Guide: Gingival Grafting

Section 1: First 24 Hours

What to Expect

Pain:

Pain depends on the **size and type** of graft.

- Free Gingival Grafts & Connective Tissue Grafts usually hurt **more** than cadaver grafts because of the additional donor site (roof of the mouth).
- Pain is often worst in the first 1–3 days.
- If pain **increases again between days 3–7**, call our office.

Bleeding:

Some bleeding during the first **24 hours** is normal. Blood mixed with saliva can look heavier than it is. Light bleeding at bedtime is OK—use a towel on your pillow.

Swelling:

Swelling depends on graft size. It is usually greatest during the first **4 days** and starts to decrease by **7–10 days**. If swelling **increases again between days 3–7**, call us.

Sutures:

You may feel stitches with your tongue—**do not touch or pull them**, as this can disrupt graft healing.

Strict No-Can-Do's

- **Do NOT pull your lip** to look at the graft for **3 weeks**.
 - No rinsing with anything for **24 hours**.
 - No spitting, using straws, or touching the graft area for **2 weeks**.
 - No rubbing or pressing on the face over the graft.
 - No smoking or alcohol for **3 days**.
 - No exercise, mowing, vacuuming, shoveling, or sports for **5 days**.
 - No hot foods/drinks (warm is OK) for **7 days**.
 - No spicy foods, chips, popcorn, carbonated drinks, or acidic juices for **14 days**.
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Things You SHOULD Do

Cold Packs:

Use ice on the face next to the surgical site: **20 minutes on / 20 minutes off** for the first **36 hours**.

Medications:

Take all prescribed medicines exactly as directed, with food unless told otherwise.

Oral Hygiene:

- No rinsing for **24 hours**.
- **Do NOT brush or floss the grafted area for 2 weeks**.
- Brush and floss the rest of your mouth as usual.
- Do **not** use a Waterpik or water-flossing device—they are too traumatic.
- You may gently use prescription rinse, Listerine, or warm salt water (1 tsp salt in ½ glass warm—not hot—water).
- Do **not** rinse vigorously. Gently rock your head side to side to bathe the graft.

**Palatal Stent (if provided):**

- Wear the plastic stent over the roof of your mouth as much as possible for the first **7 days**.
- You can eat and drink with it in place; rinse it afterward.
- If there is a sharp area on the stent, you may carefully trim it.

Diet (First 24 Hours):

Soft, **cool or cold** foods only.

- **Beverages:** smoothies, protein shakes, iced tea, milk, milkshakes (no straws), Boost/Ensure/Muscle Milk, water
 - **Main:** cold pasta, cold soup, cold mashed potatoes
 - **Desserts:** applesauce, pudding, Jell-O, mousse, yogurt
- Chew on areas **away from the graft**, take small bites, and avoid highly seasoned or sharp foods.

Vitamin Supplementation:

Use a high-quality multivitamin **with Vitamin D** while healing. We recommend the **DentaMedica Recovery Kit**, designed for post-surgical dental healing.

Section 2: Days 2–14**What to Expect****Pain:**

Day 2 can be worse than day 1. Pain is usually worst during the first **3 days** and should be mostly gone by **10–14 days**. If pain or swelling **increases again between days 3–7**, call us.

Bleeding:

Light pink oozing is normal.

Spontaneous bleeding up to **7 days** after surgery can occur, especially from the **roof of the mouth** (donor site).

- Apply **firm pressure** with **damp gauze** to the roof of the mouth for **45 minutes**.
- If still bleeding, apply firm pressure with a **damp tea bag** for another **45 minutes**.
- If bleeding continues, call the office.

Swelling:

May increase on day 2, then should level off by **day 3** and begin to decrease by **days 4–5**. If swelling increases again between days 3–7, call us.

Bruising:

Bruising (black/blue/green/yellow) is common and related to the size and complexity of the procedure. Most bruises fade in **7 days**, though some last up to **14 days**.

Things You SHOULD Do**Warm Packs:**

After **24–36 hours**, you may switch to warm packs if desired (gentle, not hot).

Oral Hygiene:

Continue to **avoid brushing the grafted area** until your **2-week post-op appointment**. Continue normal hygiene elsewhere.

Palatal Stent:

You **may** continue to use the stent up to **14 days**, but it is **not required after 7 days**.

Diet (Days 2–14):

Rule: If you can **easily pinch through it**, you can eat it.



- Continue soft foods, small bites, and **completely avoid chewing on the grafted area.**
- Soft Food Ideas (Days 2–14, Warm or Cold – Never Hot):**
- **Drinks:** apple cider, coffee, tea (green, black, herbal)
 - **Breakfast:** scrambled eggs, omelets, oatmeal, French toast, pancakes, waffles, soft cereals
 - **Meals:** soups, pasta, baked/steamed fish, frittata, stews, crock-pot meals, slow-cooked meats and veggies, mac and cheese, meatloaf
- Vitamins:**
Continue your multivitamin with **Vitamin D.**
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Section 3: Day 15 and On

What to Expect

Pain & Swelling:

You should not have major pain going into the **third week**. New or worsening pain or swelling—call us.

Sutures:

- Resorbable sutures are usually gone by now.
 - Non-resorbable sutures are typically removed at your **3-week post-op** visit (sometimes later).
 - If you feel a stitch remains after it was supposed to be removed, call the office.
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Things to Avoid

- No Waterpik near the graft area for **at least 1 month** after surgery.
- No rubbing or pressing on the area where the graft was performed. The graft needs **3 months with no outside pressure.**

Things You SHOULD Do – Oral Hygiene

By week 2, you should feel close to your normal self.

- Stop using the **prescription oral rinse.**
- After your **3–4 week post-op appointment**, you will use a **roll brush technique** around the graft for the next **6 weeks** with a **soft toothbrush only.**

Roll Brush Technique (First 6 Weeks):

1. Place the bristles on the gums at a **45° angle** to the teeth, with the sides of the bristles resting against the tooth.
 2. Gently roll the brush from gum to tooth by rotating your wrist.
 3. Do this **10–15 times** in each area.
 4. Check your teeth to ensure all visible plaque has been removed.
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Diet (Longer Term)

- Take small bites and chew only on the **opposite side** of the graft.
 - **Avoid chewing on the grafted area for at least 2 months.**
 - If surgery was done on **both sides**, follow the **soft diet (Days 2–14 foods)** for **2 full months.**
 - Continue your multivitamin with Vitamin D.
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Section 4: What's Next?

Final Evaluation

You may be asked to return **2–4 months** after surgery.



- This visit is to confirm the graft is healing as planned.
- Some patients need **two-stage grafting**. If a second stage is planned, it will be scheduled at this visit.

Emergency Contact

In case of emergency, you can reach the doctors on their cell phones:

- Dr. John Thousand – 303-250-4091
- Dr. Michael Romani – 559-300-9953
- Dr. Hailey McKinley – 812-661-0931
- Dr. Jessica Koster – 214-608-8046

Scan for Instructions

Post-op video instructions for gingival grafting:



Scan this code →

Instructions for keeping your gingival graft clean:



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