



Post-Operative Instructions: TMJ

If you have any questions or concerns after your surgery, you can reach your doctor 24 hours a day by calling our office number. We should always be your first resource if you are having difficulty.

You will receive general anesthesia during your procedure as well as various pain medications immediately afterward, so when it is time for you to go home you will leave in the care of your escort. It is important that a person be willing and able to look after you and take responsibility for you until you are adequately recovered to be on your own. How long that will take varies greatly and depends entirely upon the individual. You will, however, need someone with you for up to a week following your surgery.

It is important for the week following your surgery that you keep your head elevated as much as possible. If you can sleep with your upper body elevated somewhat, this will reduce the amount of swelling you experience and you will have less pain. It is also helpful to apply ice intermittently over the operated joint for several days following surgery. It is best to wrap the ice pack in a thin towel and to use it for only 15 minutes at a time. If you leave it in one place too long, you can injure your skin.

It is good to get up and move around and walk frequently. This will also reduce the amount of swelling and pain. Be very careful at first, however, that you have assistance when standing up until you are certain that you are not lightheaded and are not at risk of falling.

You will either have sutures in front of your ear adjacent to the surgery site or, if your procedure is arthroscopic, small puncture marks in front of your ear. You should avoid soaking these areas when bathing, but a small amount of water is not a problem. If the areas get damp, blot them dry. If you have sutures, these areas should be dressed with Neosporin® ointment twice daily for the first week after surgery.

You should maintain a soft diet for 6 weeks following your surgery. At that time you can start to advance back to a normal diet as you can tolerate it. Your doctor and/or your physical therapist will give you specific guidance regarding diet if necessary. If you have been working with a physical therapist, you should plan to see them within 1 week of surgery to resume therapy.

You will be prescribed pain medications and antibiotics after surgery. It is vital that you have some food in your stomach before each time you take these medications, or they may upset your stomach or even make you vomit. It is important to take pain medicines as frequently as needed to keep pain under control. If you wait to take pain medicines until the pain is more intense, it can be harder to get under control.

If you have regular medications prescribed by your physician that you take on a regular basis, you should resume taking these on your normal schedule unless you are instructed otherwise.