

## THE PIPER CLINIC

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### DENTAL TREATMENT AND OTHER PRECAUTIONS FOR PATIENTS WHO HAVE HAD TEMPOROMANDIBULAR SURGERY

Patients who have had previous temporomandibular joint surgery may be more prone than most patients to muscle spasm and to inflammatory changes in their temporomandibular joints. Therefore, I have devised these guidelines in an effort to help patients and their treating dentists to minimize these side effects.

In general, I recommend that no dental work be performed for nine months following a surgical procedure in order to protect the surgical repair and in order to avoid inflaming the temporomandibular joints. However, there are times when emergency procedures need to be performed, and in general I simply recommend that the emergency procedure be performed as quickly as possible to get the patient to a holding pattern for finalization of any of the required treatment subsequent to the first nine months following the surgery. Therefore, a restoration may fracture and ultimately the patient may require a crown, however, if it were feasible to provide a temporary restoration during the first nine months this would be advisable. In addition, if a patient were at risk for a pulpitis, then I would recommend that emergency therapy be provided to help them to avoid the possibility of a root canal.

As a routine I ask that patients not undergo any form of oral prophylaxis for a period of nine months following any surgery on their temporomandibular joints. At that point, and thereafter, tooth cleaning or deep scaling can be provided as the needs of each patient dictate provided my guidelines regarding mouth opening are followed. These guidelines will be outlined below.

Following the first nine months after surgery, patients need to be protected against development of inflammation and muscle spasm, and their degree of mouth opening needs to be protected. For control of inflammation, I recommend that patients be given an anti-inflammatory medication such as Motrin 800-mg. p.o., t.i.d. beginning on the day prior to the dental treatment, the day of the treatment, and for two days thereafter. More severely inflamed patients may require the use of a steroid such as a Medrol dose pack to be dispensed and taken as directed. For control of muscle spasm, I highly recommend the use of Klonopin, 0.5 mg. p.o. one hour prior to the dental procedure, and the patient should continue to take an additional 0.5 mg. of Klonopin q. 12 hours through the day following the dental work. The Klonopin will relax the patient for the dental work and it will also help to control spasm related to the dental procedures.

In order to protect the temporomandibular joints, it is also imperative that mouth opening be limited to that which is required to perform the work. It is very important that the patient be allowed to close their mouth and rest their jaw for five minutes after every 15 minutes of open-mouth work.

Where at all possible, it is advisable that during dental treatment and other open-mouth procedures, that the total dental appointment not exceed one hour. However, I do understand that there may be situations where more extensive restorative dentistry may require longer appointment times. In this scenario then it would be important to allow the jaw to rest in the intervals described and by no means to allow the total appointment time to exceed two hours. If there were any exceptions to this, I would like them to be discussed with me ahead of time.

In addition, I precaution patients about any other procedures where their mouth would be held widely open. For example, if they should require a referral outside of your office for extraction of a tooth or removal of their wisdom teeth, then I would like for you to feel free to pass these instructions to the treating surgeon. In addition, if a patient should require a general anesthetic in a hospital setting, then you could help the patient by asking that they share instructions with the anesthesiologist to attempt to avoid wide-mouth opening. I also will have counseled the patient about these issues.

If you should have any questions at any time about any of these recommendations, please contact my clinic so that we can offer further advice.