

TMJ Surgery Post-operative Care Information

Post-operative care is important following surgery. Dr Botha's surgical treatment for TMJ is generally performed in the morning in the hospital. Patients usually go home a few hours after surgery or after 2-3 days in the case of a total TMJ replacement. Follow-up appointments will be scheduled for 1 week after the intervention. From there, we schedule post-op follow-up appointments in our office at 3 weeks and 3 months.

There is often some bruising and swelling that accompanies TMJ surgery, and that is why follow-up appointments are so critical. We prescribe short-term courses of antibiotics and pain medications for our post-op patients. Typically, we suggest patients plan to take to 2 weeks off work, but many are ready to return to normal activities much sooner than that.

After TMJ surgery, Dr Botha recommends that you:

- Restrict your activities.
- Avoid touching the wound area.
- Keep your head up 40 degrees or greater to prevent swelling for 48 hours after surgery
- Apply ice to your cheeks outside the surgery site.
- Take the prescribed pain medications as soon as you begin to feel discomfort.
- Return to Dr Botha for your post-operative visit. Please feel free to contact us if you are experiencing any problems.

Here are some additional TMJ surgery aftercare instructions which can make your recovery more comfortable.

Diet

- Your diet may be changed from liquids to soft food when your doctor says you are ready. Avoid red meat, large sandwiches on hard bread and hard fruit such as apples and pears. A soft diet consists of such things as a mashed potato, scrambled eggs, cooked white fish, pasta or food with a similar soft consistency.
- Good oral hygiene is important. Use a toothbrush or a water pic to assist you

Incision care

- Please leave the wounds close after the surgical intervention. Dr Botha will open them up during your first follow-up appointment
- Once the wound was opened by Dr Botha, please don't put ointment and creams on it. Further, please refrain from having the wounds in the sun as this can lead to scarring.

Exercise

Our open TMJ surgery patients are instructed to use an oral therapy device 5 times a day for 6 months to hasten their recovery from their TMJ disorder. This device gently opens the mouth to achieve maximum mouth opening post-operatively. This can be aided by chewing on bubble-gum and frequently increase the amount of gums so that oral opening are forced open.

Swelling/discoloration

You may experience swelling around the mouth, cheeks, eyes and sides of the face. This is the body's normal reaction to surgery and eventual repair. Swelling will appear soon after surgery and will not reach its maximum until two to three days following surgery. Apply ice to help with swelling. In some cases, black, blue, green or yellow discoloration occurs due to blood spreading beneath the tissues - this is a normal and moist heat might help.



Altered sensation

Altered sensation in the area in front of the ear as well as on the sculp is a common occurrence. This will improve quickly, but can sometimes take up to 6-9 months to return.

Muscle weakness

Temporary muscle weakness is common after approaches to the TMJ. This is as the upper branches of the nerve that supply the forehead and the eye are retracted away to get access to the joint and subsequently result in weakness of the forehead and eye. This usually recover quickly but can take up to 6-9 months to heal completely.

Ear problems

Early swelling against the external ear canal result in a temporary altered hearing. As soon as the swelling subside, hearing improve. This can take up to 3 months. Dry blood in the ear as well as Jelly (from Jelonet) further result in the temporary alteration in hearing. Be patient, it will improve.

Our goal for post-op TMJ surgery patients

- Generally, TMJ specialists consider surgery a success if a patient experiences a decrease in pain and restoration of the ability to open the mouth from 30mm to 35mm (2—3 fingers stacked). Dr Botha strive for, and usually achieve, an incisal opening of 40+mm.
- And although there are no guarantees, our patients often report prompt relief from their TMJ pain. Our expectation is that our post-op patients will be able to return to a normal life, including everything from yawning to eating a steak, without the limitations imposed by TMJ pain.

