



Post-Operative Instructions: Managing Your Condyle

Your fracture involves the part of the lower jaw bone that makes up the jaw (temporomandibular) joint. This is important because a common problem with this type of injury is healing with excessive scarring in the bone and soft tissues that can lead to long-term pain, arthritis, and permanent limitation of opening and movement of the lower jaw. Daily home care according to the following instructions is critical to give the best chance of healing without permanent problems with jaw pain and function. The ultimate outcome of your injury is very much up to you!

What you need to do:

1. Every night before going to bed, apply 2 or 3 elastics (rubber bands) to the hooks on each side of your mouth to hold the upper and lower jaws solidly together in your normal bite. The elastics should be hooked onto the braces wired to your teeth in the back and middle area on each side (avoiding the very front teeth, if possible). The elastics should be placed as straight up and down as possible between the upper and lower jaws. Usually, it is best to use 2 adjacent hooks in the upper and lower jaw for each elastic (placing them in the shape of a box) or 2 hooks in one jaw and 1 hook in the other jaw (placing them in the shape of a triangle). During the day, remove the elastics from the teeth. Eat whatever type of food you want to, attempting to return to your normal diet as soon as you can.
2. At least 4 times per day (morning, noon, afternoon, and evening), go through the jaw stretching exercises that were demonstrated to you:
 - Open your mouth as wide as possible, using your two thumbs or your index finger and thumb of each hand or tongue blades to help you stretch. Hold this stretch for 0-15 seconds. Repeat 10 times.
 - Try to move your lower jaw to the right, then to the left, then jut it forward. You may need to use your fingers/hands to help guide your jaw to perform these movements. Repeat 10 times.
3. Maintain good oral hygiene by brushing, flossing, and rinsing your mouth well, at least 2 times a day. If you don't maintain good hygiene, not only will you have discomfort, bad breath, and risk of infection, but when the braces are removed from your teeth, you may also have decay (cavities) and gum disease.
4. Keep all of your scheduled follow-up appointments.

Performing the exercises detailed above several times each and every day and applying the elastics between your jaws every night will make a huge difference in the outcome of your injury and how your jaw feels and functions the rest of your life.