

## DENTURES POST OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

The following suggestions are presented to assist you in learning to use and properly care for your new dentures. If you have had teeth removed in conjunction with the placement of new dentures, you may also refer to POST OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS FOR EXTRACTIONS.

- **Breaking in period:** Most new dentures require a breaking in period before they become comfortable. This length of time varies with each individual patient depending upon their ability, determination, and perseverance to learn how to use them. You must first learn to keep them in place, and then gradually start using them.
- **What to expect:** It is normal for you to feel awkward at first with your new dentures. Your appearance has probably undergone a slight change, your speech may seem altered, and you feel certain that your mouth is too full. Time, patience and some training will soon bring about a relaxation of the facial muscles and begin to alleviate some of the apparent problems.
- **Looseness:** If you have had teeth removed immediately prior to placement of the denture, it may feel loose, due mainly to the gum shrinkage that occurs as the gums heal. Complete healing of the gums and the underlying bone takes 3-6 months. During this period a temporary liner may be placed inside the denture to keep it relatively snug. Denture adhesives will also help in this regard. Once healing is complete, a permanent liner will be placed, and simply closing your teeth together and swallowing will help to seat the dentures by removing air and saliva from the interface.
- **Sore spots:** Soreness from uneven pressure on the gum may develop at any time, and is not unusual, especially if you have not worn a denture before. Sore spots are best corrected if the dentures are worn at least 3-6 hours before returning to the office for an adjustment appointment. This can allow a precise detection of the offending areas inside the denture, which are corrected by trimming.

- **Eating:** Start with soft foods or those that are easy to chew. Take small bites and chew slowly, trying to overcome the difficulties as they arise. Keep the food distributed evenly on both sides and chew on the back teeth. To bite foods that normally require the front teeth, such as apples or corn on the cob, apply pressure backward against the front when closing. If the denture begins to dislodge, biting with the side teeth may be an easier alternative. More difficult foods such as steak and carrots will require a gradual learning curve. Initially, it is recommended that you avoid chewing gum or attempt to eat stick or chewy foods.
- **Speaking:** Learning to talk with your new dentures in place requires some patience and perseverance. Reading aloud is a very good way to learn to enunciate distinctly, especially those sounds or words that are not clear. Try to avoid those movements of the lips and tongue that tend to displace the dentures or cause them to click. Careful practice and repetition may help to hasten the process and produce a return to your normal confident speech.
- **Mouth and Denture Hygiene:** It is extremely important to clean your dentures with a soft brush and a cleaning paste, or soapy water, after each meal. Food particles that are trapped under the denture can cause inflammation of the gums and sore spots. You should remove your denture for at least 6 hours daily, usually when going to bed at night, to give your gum tissues a rest. During this time, the dentures can be cleansed and placed in a small tub of water to prevent them from drying out, which can cause the dentures to distort and not fit well. At least once a week, place them in an enzymatic or special cleaning solution to remove those otherwise insoluble stains and proteins. Because foods will stick to the soft tissues of your mouth, it is also beneficial to brush the roof of your mouth and your tongue daily. Massaging and stimulating these tissues will reduce the incidence of inflammation and sore spots.

If your dentures were placed over new extraction sites (immediate dentures), you may wear the dentures at night for the first 3 days. This will help to promote clotting, and prevent irritations to those sites. You may then resume the directions previously described and remove the dentures when sleeping.

Be sure to have your dentures checked at least once annually as changes in the mouth, such as bone loss, and a wearing of the teeth will inevitably occur. Careful maintenance of the dentures and the supporting soft tissues will help to slow down these changes.