**Instructions: Physical Therapy**

The following sheet outlines week-by-week instructions to improve your mouth opening following surgery. Please follow this plan closely to ensure your mouth opening is to the goal of >40mm (as measured between the tips of the front teeth) by 8 weeks after surgery.

**FIRST WEEK AFTER SURGERY**
- If you have had surgery, apply ice over your cheeks for 3-4 days after surgery to help with swelling. Try to apply the ice continuously. If you are unable to do so, ice 20 minutes on, 20 minutes off.
- Use this week to recover from your surgery.

**WEEKS 2 & 3**
- **Start actively stretching your jaw.** Use the popsicle sticks and place them between your front teeth, adding one by one. You want to feel a stretch or burn in the muscles along each side of your jaw and in your temple area. Hold this stretch for 30 seconds. Then rest for one minute. Repeat for 15 minutes. Do this four times per day. (SEE PHOTO #1)
- Move your jaw side to side using your fist to push on the opposite side of the jaw.
- You should notice daily improvement of your jaw opening.

**BEFORE STRETCHING:**
- Take ibuprofen or Tylenol ES or your prescribed pain medication 30 minutes before stretching with the popsicle sticks to help ease the pain.
- Apply a warm heating pad for 15 minutes per side of your face to help loosen the muscles.

**AFTER STRETCHING:**
- Gently massage the side of your jaw or apply heat for 15 minutes per side.
- **GOAL AT THE END OF WEEK 3:** 15 popsicle sticks between your teeth.

**WEEKS 4-6**
- Become more aggressive about stretching your jaw.
  - Use the “scissor” technique. Put your middle finger on your lower teeth and thumb on your upper front teeth and push until you feel a stretch on the side of your jaw. (SEE PHOTO #2)
  - Continue this and/or the popsicle stick exercises for 15 minutes. Repeat four times per day.
  - If you have not made much progress, contact Dr. Williams immediately. You may need a referral to a physical therapist for additional help.
  - **GOAL AT THE END OF WEEK 6:** 25 popsicle sticks between your teeth or >40mm/two knuckles between your teeth (see photos at the beginning of this sheet).
WEEKS 6-8

- Your mouth opening should be back to normal. If it is not, call Dr. Williams. If you have not seen a physical therapist yet, now is the time.
- Continue to stretch as described in the previous sections.

**OTHER OPTIONS TO HELP YOUR MOUTH OPEN**

- Muscle relaxants can be prescribed to help with the pain you may experience when stretching your jaw.
- A Therabite can help with stretching your jaw. The order form and doctor’s prescription can be obtained from Dr. Williams.
- Physical therapy is always an option. Ask Dr. Williams for a referral if you are interested.

*If you do not already have a two week follow up visit scheduled, please call Tricia (801) 213-4903 or Clinic 9 (801) 587-8368 for an appointment.*

**TO STOP EXCESSIVE BLEEDING:**

- Apply damp (*not soaked*) gauze over the incision site(s) and bite down with firm but gentle pressure for 30 minutes
- Check for bleeding
- If continued bleeding, replace with a new piece of damp gauze and hold pressure for 30 – 60 minutes
- Check for bleeding
- If bleeding continues, place a wet teabag over each extraction site and bite down for 30 minutes
- Check for bleeding
- Repeat with a new teabag one more time.
- If excessive bleeding continues, call the doctor for further instructions (801) 647-7908 (Dr. Williams’ cell phone).

**Normal conditions for the first 72 hours after surgery:**

- Swelling of the cheeks
- Difficulty opening the mouth
- Mild sore throat or slight earache
- Tenderness over the wound
- A temperature of up to 101°F
- Dry lips or cracking of the corners of the mouth
- A small bruise or mild pain may develop at the IV site
- Mild oozing/bleeding

**AVOID the following activities:**

- Strenuous activity
- Eating chewy or hard foods (nuts, gum, steak) *only if* it worsens the pain in your jaw

**CALL THE OFFICE if the following symptoms occur:**

- Bleeding that does not stop with pressure or is completely soaking the gauze and filling up the mouth with blood within minutes
- Nausea and vomiting that has persisted for more than 24 hours
- Severe pain that interrupts sleeping, eating and restful recovery
- Extreme, severe swelling that involved the neck and affects breathing
- Fever greater than 101°F that persists for longer than 72 hours
- A rash on the skin that occurs after taking the medication or eating any foods