



Dear Patient,

RE: Dr. Scott Waghorn Post-Operative Advice Following Soft Tissue Surgery
(Crown Lengthening / Apical Repositioning)

Congratulations on a successful soft tissue procedure, which has been completed without any immediate complications. This guide outlines what to expect in the hours, days, and weeks following soft tissue surgery involving gum reshaping or repositioning. The healing journey after such procedures involves careful tissue remodelling, and each instruction is designed to support optimal recovery.

Physiological Overview of Healing

Crown lengthening or apical repositioning involves the surgical reshaping and lowering of gum tissue to expose more tooth structure. This is typically done for restorative or aesthetic purposes. The healing process includes:

- **Inflammatory Phase (0–3 days):** Initial swelling, mild bleeding, and discomfort are common as the immune system clears damaged cells and prepares the wound for healing.
- **Proliferative Phase (Day 3–14):** Granulation tissue forms, appearing pale, whitish or red. This is gradually replaced by new gum tissue.
- **Remodelling Phase (Week 2–12):** The gums continue to mature, stabilise, and integrate with adjacent tissue. Final contouring and pink appearance may take several weeks.

Immediately After Surgery

- **Bite on Gauze (if provided):**
Bite firmly for 30 minutes. If no gauze was placed, simply rest and avoid disturbing the site.
- **Pharmacy Visit:**
Collect any prescribed anti-inflammatories, or pain medication promptly.
- **No Brushing the Site:**
Avoid brushing or flossing the surgical area on the day of surgery. Do not touch or stretch the lips to inspect the site.

First Evening at Home

- **Warm Salt Water Rinse:**
Begin gentle rinses with ½ tsp salt in 1 cup warm water from the evening onward. Swish slowly without disturbing the surgical area.
 - **Ice Pack Application:**
Apply a wrapped ice pack to the outside of your cheek near the surgical site for 10 minutes on / 10 minutes off, for up to 6 hours. This reduces swelling and bruising.
 - **Food and Drink:**
Consume soft, cool or lukewarm foods. Examples: mashed potato, smoothies (with a spoon), soft pasta, yoghurt, soups, scrambled eggs.
Avoid hot, spicy, acidic, crunchy, or chewy items.
 - **Medication:**
Take your prescribed pain relief and any antibiotics as directed. If not prescribed, Panadol or Nurofen can be used as needed.
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Day 1–3: Early Healing

- **Expected Symptoms:**
Mild swelling, discomfort, and light oozing are normal. Gums may appear swollen or slightly bluish/red. Some tightness around the sutures is expected.
 - **Oral Hygiene:**
Brush all other areas of your mouth normally with a soft toothbrush.
Do not brush or floss near the surgical site.
Continue warm salt water rinses 2–3 times daily.
 - **Diet:**
Maintain a soft diet. Avoid foods that require chewing near the surgical site.
 - **Smoking / Alcohol:**
Avoid both for at least 7 days. These slow healing and increase infection risk.
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Day 4–7: Proliferation Phase

- **Appearance:**
The surgical area may look pale, whitish, or shiny. This is part of the healing granulation tissue formation. Sutures may still be visible.
- **Cleaning the Site:**
Start to gently clean the surgical area using a **soft toothbrush dipped in warm salt water** beginning Day 5. This depends on the location and extent of the procedure—please follow specific advice.
- **Discomfort or Itchiness:**
Mild irritation or itching can be a sign of healing.

Week 2: Tissue Maturation

- **Improvement in Appearance:**
Gums will begin to take on a healthier pink appearance. The contour should look more defined.
 - **Diet Can Expand:**
You may begin to reintroduce more solid foods, chewing on the opposite side.
 - **Brushing and Flossing:**
Unless otherwise directed, you may gently resume brushing and flossing around the area. Use an ultra-soft brush (e.g. Curaprox) and avoid aggressive brushing.
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3–6 Weeks: Final Healing

- **Tissue Stabilisation:**
Gums should now feel firm, pink, and integrated. Final contours continue to refine subtly over time.
 - **Sensitivity:**
Some mild cold or brushing sensitivity may persist but should improve. Avoid whitening products until healing is fully complete.
 - **Review Appointment:**
Please attend your scheduled follow-up visit so Scott can assess healing and discuss any next restorative steps.
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Ongoing Care

- Continue salt rinses for 1–2 weeks.
- Use a soft toothbrush and gentle technique long-term.
- Avoid poking or inspecting the area with your fingers or tongue.
- Maintain 6-monthly hygiene visits to preserve gum health long-term.

Should you have any questions or notice any unusual symptoms such as Increasing pain after Day 3, swelling that worsens or spreads, persistent bleeding or discharge, bad taste or smell, loose or detached gum tissue at any stage of your recovery, please email Scott at **scott@northshoredental.co.nz**. If concerns arise over the weekend, please do not worry—Scott is happy to help and prefers to be contacted by text message at **021737537**.

Best regards,



Dr. Scott Waghorn BDS (Otago)

Sutures

If sutures were placed, they are “resorbable” and will dissolve on their own. The dissolving time varies depending on the type of suture used in around 3-5 weeks.

Occasionally, a suture may start to dissolve and a loose end may begin hanging by a thread which can irritate your tongue. If you feel confident, you can carefully trim the loose end. Before attempting to remove a suture, it's important to ensure your instruments are clean. You can sterilise small nail scissors and tweezers by placing them in a cup of boiling water for approximately 10 minutes. Allow them to cool completely before use.

Once your instruments are sterilised and cooled, use the small nail scissors to snip the stitch, and then if needed gently remove it with tweezers by pulling on the knot end. Avoid pulling the knot through the healing gum, as this can be quite uncomfortable.

If you prefer, we are happy to remove the sutures for you. Please call the practice and request a 5-minute appointment for suture removal. We do not routinely charge for this, provided there are no other issues to address.

Additional Information: Homeopathic Remedies

Arnica: Some patients find Arnica helpful in managing post-op swelling and bruising. Arnica's effects are thought to be related to its potential to reduce inflammation.

- **Arnica 30C:** Take one pillule (small tablet) every 2 hours for the first day, then reduce to three times daily for the next 2-3 days.
- **Commence Dosing:** Start taking Arnica as soon as possible after the extraction.
- **Continue Use:** Continue until the swelling and bruising have subsided.

Chamomile: Chamomile is another option that some patients find helpful for post-op recovery. It is known for its anti-inflammatory and calming properties. These properties are due to compounds in chamomile that may interact with the body's inflammatory pathways. It can be used as a tea or as a cold compress.

- **Chamomile Tea:** Drink a cup of chamomile tea 2-3 times a day. Make sure the tea has cooled down.
- **Cold Compress:** Make a strong brew of chamomile tea, cool it completely, soak a clean cloth in the tea, and apply it to the outside of your cheek near the extraction site for 15-20 minutes, 2-3 times a day.