

## **CARE OF THE MOUTH FOLLOWING** **A SOFT TISSUE GRAFT**

The important point is to leave the graft site (recipient site) undisturbed. This is especially important if we are striving for root coverage. Be careful not to dislodge the periodontal dressing over the graft, if there is one. Use caution when eating. Begin brushing the rest of the mouth the day after surgery, but try to avoid brushing the graft site.

Depending upon the specific type of surgical procedure performed, the area where the graft was taken (the roof of the mouth or hard palate) may cause you the most problems. Since you do not form a scab in the mouth, the area on the palate could become ulcerated. **Do not become concerned - this is normal healing.**

In some cases, a "plastic" bandage covered with a white periodontal dressing may be placed over the donor site. This dressing is easily disturbed. It is, however, only there for your comfort; it does not specifically help with the healing. The most common problem, other than discomfort, associated with the palate is *bleeding*. The slightest trauma during eating, playing with the tongue, etc. may initiate oozing or even profuse bleeding. **Do not panic.** Simply apply pressure with a wet gauze to the area for a minimum of five minutes. Always remove all large clots before applying pressure.

This type of bleeding may occasionally occur for up to a week following surgery, especially if you have not been on a high protein diet. Poor healing will also result if you do not maintain proper nutrition. *Tuna* is an excellent source of protein, and has been shown to have a profound effect on healing. It is recommended that you eat a can of tuna a day. Another good idea is to take a vitamin supplement, one that is high in *vitamin C* and *zinc*. If the vitamin supplement is taken in the middle of a meal, you maximize absorption. The palate will be more comfortable and heal more rapidly if you avoid excessive sugar, salt, spicy, and acidic foods.

**Smoking** has been shown to have a strong detrimental effect on healing and success of the graft. Smoking appears to affect the circulation of the graft and may cause the graft to slough, resulting in recession. It is very important, therefore, to stop smoking during the healing phase, or at the very least, to cut down considerably.

Please call Dr. Orr if you have any questions.