Post Surgical Care of Mandible or Maxilla Surgery

Home patient care after orthopedic surgery is critical to the success of the surgery. Not following these instructions could alter the anticipated outcome of the surgery. The following instructions will be your general guide to home care. Your surgeon may have more detailed instructions for you regarding a rehabilitation program for your pet’s specific surgery.

General Activity Restrictions:

The most important restriction for mandibular surgery is to not allow your pet to eat hard food. Soften the food with warm water or used canned food until the fracture is sufficiently healed. If your pet has a tape muzzle, use A/D diet with water in a blender to a pancake batter consistency so it can be easily lapped up. Some patients will have a feeding tube placed and you will be shown how to properly utilize and care for the feeding tube by the doctor or technician.

Items That Are Not Permitted:

1. No chew toys of any kind.
2. No chewing on rocks or sticks.
3. No tug of war playing with ropes or socks or rubber toys.

Other Post Operative Instructions

1. Skin sutures or staples are removed in ten days. Sutures in mouth are dissolving. Use all medications as directed.
2. Mild swelling may occur near the incision. Your veterinarian should check moderate or severe swelling immediately.
3. If you notice any swelling in the neck or under the tongue, have your veterinarian evaluate it.

External Fixator Instructions

1. If your pet has an external fixator you must keep the area between the connecting rod (steel or acrylic) and the lips clean of food and debris. You can do this with a sink spritzer (small pets) or a garden hose (large pets) with gentle streams of water. A syringe with warm water can also be used.
2. The entry of the pins into the skin will always have some mild discharge and scabs and these need to be cleaned regularly with q-tips and hydrogen peroxide. Failure to keep this clean will cause buildup of normal serous fluid that develops around the pin and can create infection and premature pin loosening and failure of the repair.

3. Notify me of any serious swelling under the fixator connecting rod or increased discharge from the pin tracts.

4. It may take your pet a short time to get used to the extra weight of the fixator.

**Intraoral Acrylic Splint**

1. Good oral hygiene is essential to caring for an intra-oral acrylic splint. Rinsing the mouth with a 0.12% chlorhexidine solution on a two to three times daily is very important using a curved tip syringe provided by your veterinarian.

2. Additives to the drinking water, such as BreathaLyser or Oxyfresh, can help control oral bacteria.

3. An E-collar may be necessary for the first few days until your pet get’s used to having the splint in his/her mouth to prevent using the paws to dislodge the splint or injure the oral tissues.

4. Weekly recheck are important to check the integrity of the splint and the jaw alignment.

5. If the splint becomes dislodged, save it and bring it in with your pet. A light anesthetic will be used to re-apply the splint with extra wire support. If your pet has twisted wire on the underside of the jaw, keep these tracts clean with hydrogen peroxide as needed to stop accumulation of debris.

6. Light anesthesia will usually be required to remove this splint after the fracture is completely healed.

**Intraoral Jaw Wiring**

1. Wires can be visible around the teeth or bone or under the skin and gums. If your pet has visible wires, please check daily to make sure they have not broken or fallen off. If they are damaged, call immediately for a recheck.

2. Do not let food or debris collect under the wires. Use a small syringe or tukey baster or hose to run water under the wires or use a soft bristle tooth brush to clean daily.

**Resuming Normal Food**

Resuming normal food depends upon the state of healing. Like humans, every patient heals at a slightly different rate. Once your pet shows adequate healing of the
surgery, you will be instructed to allow your pet to resume normal eating and playing habits.

**Expected Results**

Jaw surgery patients heal in about 3-4 weeks.

**Complications**

As with any surgical procedure, complications can occur. Unlike human patients who understand the limitations of surgery, our patients do not know enough to protect their operated jaw. This becomes your responsibility as the pet owner. Failure to follow these instructions carefully can lead to infection, incision dehiscence, or other complications which can lead to costly second surgeries. The most common complication is infection or dehiscence (sutures opening up) as patients tend to lick their sutures and food can get into the incision. You can flush the wound gently with warm water in a syringe if this occurs. Immediately report any redness, swelling or discharge around the surgery site. Tumor re-growth is also a possible complication if your pet had a tumor removed. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask your veterinarian.

**Follow Up Instructions:**

- Mouth gag placed post-operatively to be removed in ____ weeks
- Recheck in ten days: Sutures / Staples removal / Dissolving sutures
- Any swelling or redness near the jaw should be checked immediately.
- Recheck every 2 weeks to evaluate progress and jaw alignment
- Start antibiotic tonight
- Start pain medication tonight
- Soft food only until healed (canned or mix warm water with dry food and let sit for ten minutes)
- Recheck drop off on empty stomach in ____ weeks to check healing with radiograph and possibly remove wires / pins / mouth gag