

## GINGIVAL GRAFTING PROCEDURES—QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### **What is the condition that requires correction?**

You have been referred to our office because of the presence of a muco-gingival defect. This soft tissue defect occurs when there has been enough recession of the gum that (and this is the most important aspect of this problem) there is no longer a band of keratinized gingival tissue around the neck of the tooth. Two types of soft tissue are found in the mouth. The first type of tissue is mucosal tissue, which is a very elastic, moveable tissue that lines the cheeks, the floor of the mouth and the lips. The purpose of this mucosal tissue is to provide free and easy movement of these structures. The other type of tissue is called keratinized gingival tissue and is what one typically thinks of as gum tissue. The keratinized gingival tissue is found in bands around the necks of all the teeth and covers the roof of the mouth or palate. Its qualities are opposite to that of the mucosal tissue, in that it is very tough, firm and is bound down to the underlying root surfaces or bone. The keratinized gingival tissue also contains a layer of keratin very much like the skin on the exterior surfaces of the body. This keratinized gingival tissue is designed to resist the forces applied to the tissues when one masticates or chews food. A muco-gingival defect occurs when there has been enough recession that there is no longer any attached keratinized tissue present and the tissue margin exists in the mucosal tissue. The problem with an area like this is that such a gum line is unstable and will continue to recede, exposing even more root surface over time.

### **What can be done to remedy this situation?**

The major goal in treating this condition is to establish an adequate band of keratinized gingival tissue around the neck of the tooth exhibiting the muco-gingival defect. This will stabilize the gum line and prevent further recession or root exposure. Frequently the grafting procedure will not only create the needed gum tissue, but will also cover most if not all the exposed root surface. This is done in areas of cosmetic concern where the gum line may be visible when one smiles widely.

### **What are the details of these procedures?**

The grafting procedure is begun by preparing a graft bed at the existing level of the gum line. The area is measured and a suitable sized piece of tissue is removed from the palate. The area of tissue retrieval is under the surface palatal tissue. The palate wound is sutured closed and this area will regenerate completely restoring the area to normal in 2-3 months. Healing is such that the same area can be used later as a donor site for another gingival graft. The grafted site is somewhat delicate for the first 6 weeks and care must be taken to guard against any physical trauma (i.e. no brushing or chewing hard foods over the graft for the six weeks) The graft from the palatal is placed against the root surface and the flap of tissue is raised over the graft and sutured to place. This external flap of tissue allows the graft to survive on the root surface, which is devoid of nutrition.

### **What can I expect afterwards?**

Both the graft site and the palate will be sore after the procedure. There will be a minimal amount of swelling because this is entirely a soft tissue procedure. The palatal area will be sore up to two weeks after the procedure but this will be most intense initially and will become a dull soreness later and is best managed by using the stent and / or anti-inflammatory medications. Most individuals are quite surprised by how well they do afterwards. A complete list of postoperative instructions and suggestions will be given to you at the procedural appointment.

### **INSTRUCTIONS FOR SEDATION PATIENTS**

If you have been appointed for a surgical procedure, which will utilize Oral or IV sedation, certain precautions should be considered prior to your appointment.

- Do not eat solid foods for at least 6 hours before the appointment
- Please advise Dr. Davies of any medications you are currently taking, regardless of how simple and ordinary the medication may seem (aspirin, antihistamines, etc.)
- Another person must drive you to your surgery appointment and remain in the reception area until the procedure is completed. They should also drive you home and remain with you for at least four hours.
- Wear a short sleeve shirt/blouse or a shirt, which can easily be rolled above your elbow.
- You should plan to go home and rest after completion of the surgical procedure.