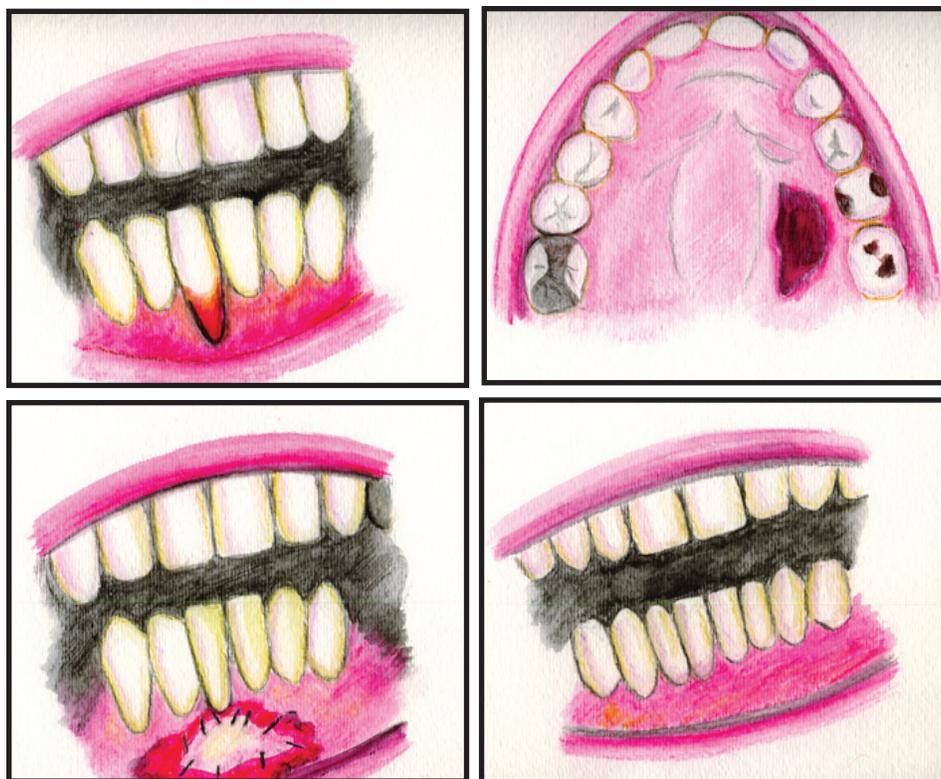


SOFT TISSUE GRAFTS

Soft tissue grafts are performed to increase attached gingiva around teeth to improve the body's "seal" around them. The oral cavity has 2 types of tissue; mucosa (the wiggly type on your cheek) & gingiva (the tough type on the roof of your mouth and around your teeth). The gingiva has fibers in it that make it tougher and allow it to "tie down" to the bone and teeth and seal the gap between the teeth and soft tissue (attached gingiva). Inadequate seal allows bacteria to penetrate into the body more easily. Some people simply do not develop adequate gingiva around their teeth or their gums recede with age resulting in exposed roots (recession). Exposed roots may be sensitive and are more susceptible to decay. The roof of the mouth is an excellent source as a donor site to harvest gingiva & place it around teeth when the recession involves 1-3 teeth. A plastic stent is made to wear over the palate & the tissue grows back over ~3-4 weeks.

Animal source soft tissue grafts (Alloderm®) or synthetic membranes are available which avert the need to harvest from the palate. This is recommended when the recession involves multiple teeth which will require a large donor site. No cases of disease transmission have been reported with the products we use.



The procedure is accomplished in about 1 hour/1-3 teeth with local anesthetic and mild to moderate pain can be expected. A pain reliever and topical agents (fluoride varnish & Benzodent® or Kanka® cream) are used for a few days to 2 weeks to sooth the healing process. Other dental procedures can be performed six weeks after surgery in the surgical site.

Benefits: The covered roots are less sensitive to temperature changes, less susceptible to decay, and more esthetic. The grafted band of tissue will help prevent further recession in the site even if no root coverage is achieved. The usual expected result yields 50-80% root coverage. It is difficult to achieve 100% coverage.

Risks/complications: Delayed healing may occur if donor site tissue necroses (~75% in large CT grafts in Dr. Heinze's experience). Healing with pain may occur over 4-6 weeks. The graft tissue may necrose resulting in no improvement or more recession (rare). A second surgery may be required in order to improve root coverage if no root coverage results after the procedure.

Smokers should expect 50% of the results of nonsmokers. Smokers are advised not to smoke for 48 hours before and 4 weeks after any oral surgery in order to minimize impact on healing and the result. Delayed healing and graft necroses are more common in smokers. Use of nicotine gum, a nicotine patch or a smoking cessation program is strongly advised.

It is critical that you follow the post-operative home care directions and have a proper realistic expectation regarding post-operative healing. Some patients simply do not tolerate surgery well and may not have any experience to reference in relation to their post-operative healing process. Someone who eats highly refined sugars (Twinkies®) and inflammatory exciting food, consumes > 2 oz. alcohol/day, or smokes should not expect to heal as fast or uneventfully as someone who consumes freshly juiced fruits & vegetables and inflammatory attenuating foods, consumes < 2 oz. alcohol/day, and does not smoke. Despite all precautions, some people may still have a healing problem. Most important is to keep the surgical area clean using the ultrasoft brush and chlorhexidine or Prevention® mouthrinse.

Please direct any questions to Dr. Heinze.