

Lower Jaw (Mandibular) Osteotomy after care

Maxillofacial Department



Patient information leaflet

What does the operation involve?

The operation is carried out from inside your mouth. A cut is made through the gum behind your lower teeth to gain access to the jawbone. The lower jaw is then cut to allow it to be split in a controlled manner. It is then moved to its new position and held in place with very small screws. The gum is stitched back in place with dissolvable stitches that will come out on their own.

What can I expect after the operation?

You will be very sleepy when you get back to the ward having spent a time in the Recovery room and will need to rest quietly so we do not recommend that you have visitors other than close family.

Perhaps surprisingly it is not a particularly painful operation but it is still likely to be sore and regular painkillers will be arranged for you. The discomfort is usually at its worst for the first few days but some aching may take a couple of weeks to disappear.

It is necessary to make sure the area heals without any infection and so you will be given antibiotics through a vein in your arm whilst you are in hospital. You will be sent home with painkillers and possibly a course of antibiotics.

After the operation your face will be swollen and feel tight, your jaws will be stiff and you will find that you cannot open your mouth widely. You should expect to feel a bit miserable and sorry for yourself for the first few days!

You will have a very small keyhole access wound covered with steristrips on either side of your face. These strips will be removed after a week.

Swelling and bruising is variable and generally at its worst for the first week after the operation. This can be reduced by sleeping propped up with extra pillows and using icepacks (covered by a thin cloth) for a few days. You will have a hilotherapy mask overnight after the operation in place of icepacks to keep a constant cold compression on the area. Most of the swelling disappears over the following 2 weeks but there is often some residual swelling which takes longer although this will probably only be noticed by you and your family.

There may be some numbness of your lips, tongue or face. This usually settles within the first few weeks but can sometimes take several months to wear off. Some is very occasionally permanent.

Can I eat normally after surgery?

To begin with, no. On return to the ward you will be encouraged to begin drinking. This may need to be using a straw. If you are numb and swollen you may find you “dribble” to begin with. This will improve as the feeling returns. As soon as you are drinking adequately, your “drip” will be discontinued although the plastic tube (cannula) will stay until the next day before you go home.

Drink plenty of fluids. You may need a liquid diet for the first day after your operation but as soon as you are able you can start a soft diet. You should aim to eat “little and often” as opposed to 3 big meals a day. Eating may take time at first as, especially if you have elastics in place, you may need to spoon in each mouthful. As the swelling subsides this will get easier.

Soups and smoothies are good. Then progress to minced food, fish, mashed potatoes and vegetables, gravy etc. Rice, noodles and pasta and their accompanying sauces. Stewed fruit, yoghurts and milk puddings.

After 6 weeks you should be able to eat a normal diet.

Oral hygiene

You should start to clean your teeth with a baby toothbrush and toothpaste on the evening of your operation and use the mouthwash given to you on the ward. You will not do any damage to the stitches etc by brushing your teeth. It is essential to keep your teeth and braces clean.

How long will I be in hospital?

You will be in hospital for possibly 1 night before your operation and then 1 night afterwards. On the morning after your operation X-rays will be taken to check the new position of your jaw. If you are well enough you will be allowed to go home later in the day.

Do I need to take time off work/college?

It is recommended that you take at least 2 weeks off after this type of operation. It is important to remember that you should not drive or operate machinery for 48 hours after general anaesthetic.

Contact sports should be avoided for 6 weeks.

What happens at home?

You must continue to keep your mouth and teeth clean. This is very important even if you still have elastics on your braces.

Your new bite position may feel strange to begin with. The surgeon will check that your teeth continue to meet in the correct position.

You should continue to sleep propped up in bed with several pillows until the majority of the swelling goes.

You will have a check up with your surgeon one week after the operation and then your after care will be shared between your surgeon and your orthodontist.

Do not drink any alcohol if you are taking painkillers or antibiotics.

Do not smoke or healing will be delayed and you may get an infection.

Are there any problems I should be aware of?

Change in bite position: If the new position becomes painful or the jaw becomes painful to move contact the Maxillofacial doctor on call. (See back of this leaflet.)

Bleeding: There may be a slight trickle of blood from your mouth for the first 24 hours. This is normal. Keep cleaning your teeth and using your mouthwash.

Infection: If you develop a temperature, increased swelling, a nasty taste in your mouth or a smelly discharge from your mouth, contact the Maxillofacial doctor on call.

Do I still need to visit my dentist? Yes. You still need regular checkups on the health of your teeth and gums throughout your treatment.

Reference source

- www.BAOMS.org.uk
- www.yourjawsurgery.co.uk

Contact details

For further information or advice please contact us.

Maxillofacial Outpatients

Telephone: 01483 406775 (Monday–Friday, 9am–4.30pm)

Outside these hours or in case of an emergency call **01483 571122** and ask for the on-call Maxillofacial doctor.

Operation queries/changes

If you need to cancel your operation or for queries regarding your date of operation contact the **Admissions Office** direct on **01483 402734**.

PALS and Advocacy contact details

Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

Telephone: 01483 402757

Email: rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net

Opening hours: 9.00am–3.00pm, Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

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