

Your Jaw Surgery

After Surgery Advice

After your surgery it is important you consider the following:

Immediately after Surgery

- When you wake up after the surgery you are more likely to feel uncomfortable rather than in pain. **You will be provided with painkillers, antibiotics and a mouthwash.**
- You may find your mouth has excess saliva or it may feel dry but this will improve with time and you can help improve this by taking regular amounts of water using a syringe or straw.
- Your lips, face and mouth will feel numb and swollen. The swelling normally peaks around 48 hours after surgery and the bruising is normally evident at day 3 or 4. Both swelling and bruising get better within a couple of weeks, although it can take up to 6 months or longer for the swelling to disappear completely. Ice packs may be offered to you on the ward and can help with the swelling in the first 12 -24 hours.
- Your lips will be numb for a short time after surgery. It is similar to the feeling after an injection at the dentist. The top lip if you have had top jaw surgery usually returns to normal quickly. The bottom lip for lower jaw surgery is more unpredictable and can take up to 18 months to feel normal. **For a small number of patients the feeling in the lip never completely returns. The lips still move and look normal.**
- Your lips will be dry after the surgery. Keep them moist using a lip balm.
- You may find sleeping difficult and you will need to find a new sleeping position. Initially you will need to sleep on your back with your head raised

and supported with extra pillows to help minimise swelling and discomfort.

- You can expect to find blood in your mouth the first week after surgery and for patients that have had top jaw surgery you may find blood comes from your nose.
- Stitches are dissolvable and can take 2 to 3 weeks to disappear.

No smoking

- Smoking significantly reduces the blood supply in the mouth and slows down the healing process; it also leaves your mouth dirty.
- Patients who smoke are at a much higher risk of complications and infections after surgery.

Elastics

- Most patients need to wear elastics and they are helpful to guide your bite into its new position.
- If you have elastics, leave them alone for the first week; do however note where they have been placed.
- If one breaks before your follow up appointment try and replace it and if you cannot replace it contact the orthodontic department for advice.

Follow-up

- You are normally seen weekly for the first 3 to 4 weeks.
- At the first follow-up appointment:
 - You will normally be seen by the surgeon and one of the orthodontic team.
 - At this stage your bite is checked and you will be shown how to wear and change your elastics.
 - We often do post-operative x-rays at this stage.
- Some patients may have a plastic wafer (thin piece of plastic attached to the top teeth with elastics or wires). This should also be left in place until your follow up appointment. You should clean as instructed trying to ignore the wafer's presence.

Recovery

- It is quite usual for patients to feel a little low after surgery.
- Allow yourself time to recover.
- Have plenty of rest the first week.
- After this - see friends and family, and do gentle exercise e.g. gentle walks in the fresh air. It is important to maintain good general hygiene e.g. regular showers and hair washing will be good to keep a positive mental attitude which will all aid your recovery.
- Most patients are ready to return to work or education 4-6 weeks after the surgery although this varies depending on the surgery you've had and the type of work you do (your surgeon will guide you with this).
- You will be able to participate in non-contact sport 6-8 weeks after surgery. We recommend that you discuss with the surgeon when you can participate in contact sports.

Please see your Orthodontist or your Surgeon if you are unsure about any of the above points or have any further questions.

Please also take a note of the contact details for your department during normal working hours and in an emergency so that you can make contact easily.