

# **Patient Information**

## **Orthognathic Surgery**

Oral and Maxillofacial  
Department



## **Introduction**

The purpose of this leaflet is to ensure you fully understand the benefits and risks of orthognathic surgery.

## **What is it?**

Orthognathic surgery involves surgery to the upper and lower jaw, or a combination of the two.

Orthognathic surgery is the straightening of the jaws by means of surgery.

Ortho = straighten

Gnathic = jaws

## **What are the benefits?**

Orthognathic surgery can be performed to address problems when jaw and facial structures have not grown in a harmonious way. Examples of theses problems include:

- Poor facial appearance;
- Eating difficulties;
- Speech difficulties;
- Tooth damage or wear;
- Damage to the gums, or a combination of these.

## **What is involved?**

- We will discuss any concerns you may have and what you hope your treatment will achieve.
- A full medical history is taken, followed by an examination of the face, jaws and teeth.

- Special records are taken which include x-rays, photographs and plaster models of your teeth. These are used for records, further examining and planning.
- Various plans are made by making special tracings of your x-rays and photographs. Your jaw movements are planned using the plaster models of your teeth.
- A consultation with the orthodontist and the maxillofacial surgeon is then arranged to discuss all aspects of the proposed treatment.
- A treatment plan is created. Treatment will involve approximately 18-24 months of orthodontic treatment. This will include fixed braces. Surgery will be completed and a further six months or so of orthodontics may be required to finish the treatment.
- When the fixed brace is removed a removable retainer will be fitted to keep the teeth and jaws in their new position. These will be worn full time for six months, and then at night-time only after that.
- After a full discussion you will be asked if you wish to proceed with treatment.
- You are under no obligation to have orthognathic treatment completed, it is your decision.

## **Patient co-operation**

Since the treatment is lengthy and requires many visits, co-operation is essential. In particular, oral hygiene must be maintained at the highest possible level or problems may occur.

## **Orthodontic braces**

Usually you will need orthodontic braces to prepare for this treatment. It is important to get the teeth in the best position for surgery and to produce the best possible bite after surgery.

Orthodontic braces help to prevent relapse and make a better result from the surgery more likely. This will enable the jaws to be repositioned and the teeth to fit together properly.

## **The surgery**

The surgery is nearly always carried out from inside the mouth, so no scars are made on the face.

## **Frequently asked questions**

Please see answers below to the most common questions about this surgery:

### **How long will I be in hospital?**

You will be in hospital for 1-2 days. You will be encouraged to walk around as much as possible on the day after your surgery.

### **Are the jaws wired together?**

No, not usually.

When you wake up you should be able to open your mouth. Small bone plates and screws are used to hold the jaws in their new position.

Usually a day or two after surgery small elastic bands are used to guide you into the new position.

Rarely, it may not be possible to plate the jaws as planned and the jaws may be wired together.

## **Can I eat after the surgery?**

Initially, only fluids are taken by mouth. On the day after the surgery a soft diet will be encouraged and this will continue for about six weeks while the bones heal. Then a gradual return to a normal diet is possible. You will receive a booklet before you leave hospital. It is normal to lose some weight during the healing period.

## **What are the risks of this procedure?**

There are always risks with any surgery. The risks are minimised by careful planning. This type of surgery is relatively routine, but there are possible complications.

The risks associated with this treatment are described below:

### **Numb lip**

After surgery to your lower jaw, there is a high chance that your lower lip and gums may feel numb or tingly. This is because the nerve that supplies feeling in the lower lip passes through the jaw and is bruised when the jaw is split.

Feeling may return within a few weeks but may take several months, or even up to two years. In 5 % of cases the feeling may never return fully.

### **Pain**

Immediately after the surgery there will be some discomfort. Medication, in the form of painkillers, is provided by the hospital. By the time you are discharged from the hospital you should only need moderate painkillers.

## **Swelling**

Swelling occurs immediately after the surgery and can continue to develop for 48 hours. It then gradually decreases over 10-14 days. A small amount of residual swelling may take a few months to completely resolve. Medication is used during surgery to reduce the amount of swelling.

## **Bleeding after the surgery**

Minimal post-operative bleeding can be expected from the wounds in the mouth. Mixed with saliva, this may seem more than it really is. The nose may also bleed during the two weeks after the surgery, and some blood may be swallowed. If you have any concerns about bleeding you should contact the department immediately (contact details are on the back page of this leaflet).

## **Nasal blockage**

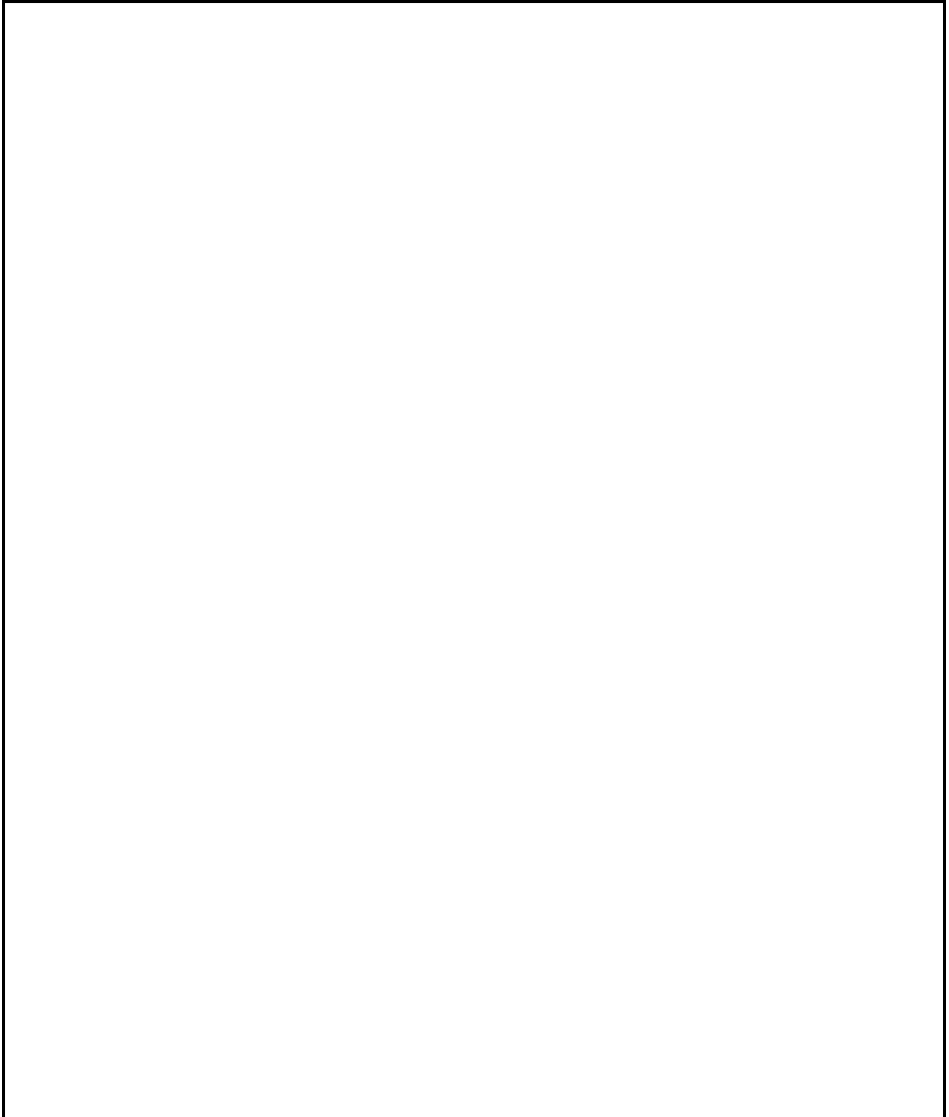
Blockage of the nasal passage may occur for two weeks after surgery if the upper jaw has been operated on. Gentle cleaning of the nostrils with cotton buds and the use of nasal spray will help.

## **Speech difficulties after surgery**

Talking and making yourself understood when the jaws are sore and swollen may be difficult initially. However, once the swelling starts to reduce this will improve quickly.

## Other questions

Please ask any other questions that occur to you. Write down any questions you have in the space below so that you do not forget to ask them when attending clinic.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write down any questions they have before attending a clinic. The box is currently blank.

## Contact details

Oral and Maxillofacial Department  
Lister Hospital  
Coreys Mill Lane  
Stevenage  
Hertfordshire  
SG1 4AB

**Telephone:** Lister Department, Stevenage ☎ 01438 284060  
New QEII, Welwyn Garden City ☎ 01707 247575

Monday to Thursday, 8.30am - 5pm  
and Friday, 8.30am - 1pm.

Out of these working hours please contact:  
Luton and Dunstable Hospital out of hours service ☎ **01582 491166**  
and **ask for the maxillofacial doctor on call.**

[www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk](http://www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk)

You can request this  
information in a different  
format or another language.

Date of publication: May 2010  
Author: Max Fax Team  
Reference: MF06      Version: 4.1 (Feb 2021)  
Review Date: February 2024  
© East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust