



University Hospitals Birmingham
NHS Foundation Trust



Maxillofacial diet and oral hygiene advice

Building healthier lives

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www.uhb.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets.htm

Following your surgery from the Maxillofacial team either intra orally (inside the mouth) or extra orally (outside the mouth including the head and neck area), you may be unable to eat solid foods for several weeks and only be able to manage fluids or semi solids. It is important that you have a good diet to aid your recovery.

Meal time

Eating may take longer than normal. You may find that eating little and often is easier.

Consistency of food

At first liquid and semi solid foods will be easiest, but you should be able to eat thicker foods such as yoghurt and custard and then progress to pureed, minced and mashed foods. Liquidising, blending or sieving your food makes food preparation easier and means that you can have more variety in your diet. Most foods can be liquidised if you use plenty of fluid in the liquidiser eg sauce, gravy, milk, water. If you have a freezer you could prepare large amounts of food using the methods suggested and then freeze these in individual portions so that they can be reheated as required eg fresh fruit, vegetables or meat.

Oral hygiene

To reduce the risk of infection it is important that you maintain a high standard of oral hygiene.

Brushing

This should start as soon as possible after surgery. It is the most effective way to remove all the food debris which collects around your teeth, wires and bars if you have them. This will also remove the film of bacteria (plaque) which constantly forms on teeth whether or not food is being ingested.

Angle your toothbrush bristles towards the gum line and brush the teeth 2 or 3 at a time, in a circular motion, covering all

surfaces of the teeth on the top and bottom jaw. Ensuring you have a methodical approach starting at one end and finishing at the other. This is known as The Bass technique and is proved to be most effective at removing plaque and preventing gum disease. This may be difficult due to limited mouth opening and time consuming around the wires and bars. We recommend using a small, soft toothbrush (a baby toothbrush is ideal). Brushing should be gentle and methodical, using a fluoride toothpaste.

After surgery your lips may be swollen or sore, a little Vaseline may be applied to ease discomfort.

Interdental cleaning

Small interdental brushes are ideal for cleaning and removing debris from between the teeth and around wires and bars. A small amount of fluoride toothpaste can be applied to the brush.

Toothpaste

Any fluoride toothpaste can be used.

Pink sponges

These are sponges on a stick, which look like a lollipop. They can be used after surgery to keep the mouth clean whilst it is swollen and sore before moving onto using your toothbrush. The sponges can be dipped into an approved anti-bacterial mouthwash e.g. Chlorhexidine mouthwash and gently swept over the soft tissues and teeth. Check pink sponges before you use them in your mouth to make sure the pink sponge is secure. Pink sponges are single use only please throw them away after use.

Mouthwashes

Saline mouthwash is made up by dissolving 1 level teaspoon of salt in a tumbler of hot water. Leave to cool slightly. This should then be swilled gently around all parts of your mouth after each

meal. Chlorhexidine mouthwash (Corsodyl) alcohol free may be prescribed for use in addition to saline. 10ml of this solution should be rinsed gently around your mouth for 1 minute, 3 times a day for a maximum of 5 days. This can also be bought over the counter at a chemist. It is advisable to brush your teeth before using the mouthwash to avoid staining.

Fluoride alcohol free mouthwash can be used once a day, ideally at a different time to tooth brushing. Use 5-10ml for 1 minute. This can be used daily for long periods preventatively and especially for patients with dental decay.

General information

Dental decay

Dental decay (caries) is caused by consuming food or drinks that contain sugar. The sugar reacts with the bacteria in the sticky layer of plaque on our teeth. This produces acids in our mouth that corrode the tooth enamel. This process is called an 'acid attack' and lasts for approximately 20-30 minutes after having sugar. After this period of time your saliva will neutralize the acid. Your teeth can tolerate this process up to 3 times a day without having an effect on the teeth. Therefore, if you enjoy sweet foods and drinks then these are best consumed all in one go at mealtimes.

Acid erosion

Acid erosion is the eroding of the hard enamel (outer surface) of the teeth but in a different way to that of dental decay. Acids from certain foods and drinks attack the enamel directly on the surface of the teeth, gradually wearing down the enamel layer. In severe cases this may make your teeth sensitive to hot or cold temperatures. Some examples of acidic food and drinks are **ALL** carbonated fizzy drinks, fruit juices, citrus fruits and dry wine.

Dairy products such as milk or cheese consumed after a meal will help neutralize the acid more quickly. Chewing a sugar free gum

after meals also helps stimulate saliva and neutralize acid faster, but if wires or bars are in place this should be avoided.

Fluoride

Fluoride toothpastes, mouthwashes and gels all help with prevention of mineral loss from the tooth by promoting remineralisation (healing) of early decay.

Gum disease

Gum disease is inflammation of the gums that can progress to affect the bone that surrounds and supports your teeth. It is caused by the bacteria in your plaque, a sticky colourless film that constantly forms on your teeth. Gum disease can start within 2-3 days of not brushing your teeth. Effective twice daily brushing, and daily use of dental floss or interdental brushes will easily remove the plaque. Signs of gum disease are- swollen gums, bleeding from the gums when brushed/flossed, discomfort, Gums that have separated from your teeth creating a pocket and constant bad breath (halitosis) or a bad taste in your mouth.

Smoking and using tobacco constricts the blood vessels masking the signs of gum disease therefore gum disease can go undetected for long periods of time.

We recommend regular visits to a dentist to check your teeth and gums so that any dental decay or gum disease can be treated quickly and effectively.

Frequently asked questions

Q. Is it going to hurt when I clean my mouth?

A. Some areas will be sore around the surgery sites whilst the tissues are healing. Be gentle when cleaning. You can use a small headed soft toothbrush.

Q. I've got no teeth so do I need to clean my mouth?

A. Yes you still need to remove food debris to prevent infection. This can be done with small pink sponges and mouthwash.

Q. Am I going to do damage to the surgery area when I clean my mouth?

A. As long as you do as advised by health professionals then you should not do any major damage.

Q. I've been told I have to clean my mouth, what do I need to do?

A. Initially whilst the mouth is still swollen and tender the pink sponges and chlorhexidine mouthwash can be used. Then approximately 5-7 days post surgery we advise using a small headed soft toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste can be introduced.

Q. I've been using Chlorhexidine mouthwash, how long should I use it for?

A. We recommend that you use Chlorhexidine for 5 days after your surgery date. You can use it for up to 2 weeks maximum if advised by a healthcare professional. This may cause staining on your teeth that can be easily removed by a dentist or hygienist.

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The Trust provides free monthly health talks on a variety of medical conditions and treatments. For more information visit www.uhb.nhs.uk/health-talks.htm or call 0121 371 4323.

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