



Lower jaw (mandible) fracture aftercare

Introduction

This leaflet has been designed to improve your understanding of how to look after your lower jaw (mandible) fracture, whether or not you have had an operation. It contains answers to many of the most commonly asked questions. If you have any other questions, or would like further explanations, please do not hesitate to ask.

Looking after your fracture

You have broken your lower jaw. We have examined you and advised whether you need surgery to help it heal. We have based the decision on the number of breaks (fractures), where they are, and whether they need treatment to help them heal.

Pain relief

Your jaw is likely to be sore, so you will need painkillers regularly to ease the pain. The discomfort is usually worse for the first few days and may take a couple of weeks to go away completely.

What can I eat and drink

Your lower jaw will take about six weeks to heal completely. During this time, you will need to eat a liquid/sloppy diet, such as mashed potato, soup, smoothies, well-cooked pasta, scrambled egg, jelly and ice cream. Any foods that require some form of chewing may move the fracture, even if you have had plates placed.

Antibiotics

If required, we will give you antibiotics through a vein in your arm (intravenously) to reduce the risk of infection of the fractures. We might give you a course of tablet antibiotics to take home if necessary.

Can I brush my teeth?

It is important that you keep your mouth as clean as possible for the first few weeks after surgery to prevent infection. You should brush your teeth after each meal. It will be sore, and you may find it difficult to clean your teeth, especially around stitches. Try using a soft, small-headed toothbrush, such as a child's brush.

Mouthwashes

Starting the day after your surgery, gently rinse your mouth with the mouthwash we advise and/or warm salt water (dissolve a flat teaspoon of table salt in a cup of warm water) three times a day for two weeks, to keep it free from food remains. We may give you mouthwash in hospital and to take home with you. Please note that mouthwash does not replace brushing your teeth.

Can I smoke or vape?

Smoking and vaping any substance can affect healing of the fracture and makes you more likely to develop an infection. You need to stop smoking and vaping for at least one week following your injury or surgery.

Information for Patients

If you would like more information about stopping smoking, please visit: www.nhs.uk/smokefree, or you can call the Smokefree National Helpline on 0300 123 1044 or speak to a member of staff for more information.

Can I drink alcohol?

Drinking alcohol can also affect healing after surgery and makes you more likely to develop an infection. You need to stop drinking for at least one week following your injury or surgery.

Repeat trauma/contact sports

During the next six weeks, the fracture will be healing and will still be weak. It is important not to injure the area again and to avoid participating in contact sports or activities that can increase the chance of the jaw being knocked.

You can start gentle exercise such as jogging or swimming after two weeks. Avoid lifting weights for six weeks.

How long will I need to take off work?

It depends on what type of job you do. If you work in an office, you may only need to take about two weeks off work. But if there is any risk of further injury then you may need up to six weeks off.

Will I need to come back to hospital?

Before you leave hospital, we will make a review appointment for you. For most jaw fractures we will only need to see you once following discharge and it is very important you attend this appointment. It will take at least six weeks after the fracture occurred or from your last surgery for your fracture to heal.

If you have any wires, metal braces or screws put in to hold elastic bands, we will take them out at a separate outpatient clinic appointment when your doctors are happy that your fracture has healed. This usually happens about four to six weeks after your operation.

The stitches inside of your mouth will dissolve, but this may take a few weeks.

If you had a cut made on the skin of your face or neck during surgery, you will need to make an appointment with your GP to have the stitches taken out seven to ten days after surgery.

Key Points

1. Liquid diet for four weeks
2. Brush teeth after every meal
3. Use mouthwash three times a day
4. No smoking or vaping for four weeks
5. Avoid any further trauma to the jaw

Department address and contact information:

If you have any concerns, please contact the on call Maxillofacial team by phoning the hospital on: 0121 371 2000

Once you are put through to switchboard you will then need to ask to speak to the maxillofacial on call team via bleep 2239

If you require this information in another format, such as a different language, large print, braille or audio version please ask a member of staff or email interpreting.service@uhb.nhs.uk.