

Having jaw surgery to correct your bite

Orthodontics and Restorative Dentistry

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Information for Patients

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What is corrective jaw surgery?

Corrective jaw surgery changes the position of the jaws. This is often done along with brace treatment when braces alone cannot correct the way your top and bottom teeth meet (bite). Normally braces are needed for 2 to 3 years before the operation to the jaws. The jaws are moved and fixed in the new position with a titanium plate which is about 2cm to 3cm long, under a general anaesthetic (sleep). A titanium plate is a sheet of metal which is fixed to the bone with screws. The braces stay on during the operation. Normally the braces are removed between 6 months and 1 year after the operation.

What happens before the treatment

Before any treatment takes place, x-rays, dental moulds and photographs are taken. These are repeated at several stages during and after treatment. You would be seen by the jaw surgeon and the orthodontist to make a plan, go through the treatment options and the risks and benefits of treatment.

Where is the jaw surgery carried out

The brace treatment is done by the orthodontist at Glenfield Hospital. You would need to come about every 8 weeks to have the braces tightened. The jaw surgery would be carried out at the Leicester Royal Infirmary.

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The surgery

The surgery normally lasts between 2 and 4 hours and you would need to stay in hospital for 1 or 2 nights. Most of the time, the surgery is carried out from inside the mouth to avoid any scars on the face.

The jaws are put in their new position and the plates normally stay in for life unless there are any problems with the plate. Occasionally the jaws have to be wired together for 6 weeks.

It is very common to have the wisdom teeth taken out at least 6 months before the jaw surgery if the lower jaw is to be operated on and you have wisdom teeth buried under the gum.

After the operation

Your face will be swollen, numb and sore and you won't be able to open your mouth very much. You will have elastics in your mouth attached to the braces. You will need to take a few weeks off work.

Some patients will have their jaws wired together after the operation to support the healing process. You will be told before the operation if you need to have your jaws wired together. They are usually wired together for about 6 weeks.

You will need to have a soft diet for a few weeks such as eating mashed potatoes and pureed food and it would be helpful to drink this through a straw.

Will it be painful after the operation?

It will be sore and this will improve over the next few weeks. You would be sent home with painkillers such as paracetamol and ibuprofen to help manage the pain.

When would I see my Orthodontist after the operation?

Within a few days after leaving hospital, an appointment will be made for you to see the Orthodontist. The brace treatment carries on as soon as possible after the operation. This involves wearing small elastic bands between your teeth to make sure they fit together in an ideal way. The wearing of these elastics is essential for the success of treatment. If your teeth have been wired together during the operation, this will be taken off 6 weeks after the operation. These patients will start wearing their elastic bands after the wires are removed.

What are the risks of surgery?

Pain, bruising, swelling, bleeding and infection are very common.

If the lower jaw is to be operated on, then permanent numbness of the jaw, chin, lower lip, teeth and gums is very common.

If the upper jaw is to be operated on, then the nose can widen and the tip can go up, which is also very common. You can also have numbness under the eyes, cheeks, upper lip, upper teeth, gums

and nose.

After the surgery, the jaws can go back part way towards their original position and this is very common.

If the plates become infected or they can be felt under the gum, then they may need removal under general anaesthetic and this is very common.

It can be common for the bones not to heal or heal incorrectly in their in their new position. If this happens then you may need another operation and possibly accept that the bite is not correct.

Commonly if the bite is not correct after the operation, the orthodontist and the surgeon may decide to operate again within 1 week to try and achieve a better bite.

It is very common to have pain from the jaw joints after surgery which may last for a long time. If the jaw joints start to shrink, then your lower jaw would move back and you could end up with an open bite at the front and this is common.

What are the benefits?

This depends on the reason for carrying out this treatment. It would vary from improving the facial profile, improve the bite, enable people to eat and chew certain foods, especially if they have an open bite.

Are there any other sources of information?

The '[British Orthodontic society– your jaw surgery](#)' website is a useful and accurate. This website has more information that includes written information, videos and interviews.

Contact details:

Department of Orthodontics and Restorative Dentistry

Glenfield Hospital, Groby Road, LE3 9QP

0116 250 2648 8am to 5pm

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