

# An Introduction to Orthognathic Surgery For Cleft Lip and Palate Patients

## What is Orthognathic surgery?

Jaw surgery, which is often done to the top and bottom jaws. The aim is to improve both the function and appearance of the upper and lower jaws, the teeth and the facial appearance as a whole.

We work in an Adult cleft team consisting of a Consultant Orthodontist, a Consultant Oral and Maxillofacial surgeon, a Consultant in Restorative Dentistry, Consultant Plastic Surgeons, Psychologists and Speech and Language therapists.

All patients need to wear fixed braces for 2-3 years, during their treatment.

## Why could it benefit me?

Orthognathic treatment has been shown to improve oral function, improve both dental and facial appearance and improve health related quality of life.

In some cases, jaw surgery may be carried out in conjunction with other procedures such as nose surgery (rhinoplasty), chin surgery (genioplasty), or the placement of cheek implants.

## When can my treatment happen?

Prior to any brace treatment all routine dental work, such as fillings, should be completed and the oral hygiene must be **excellent**.

Once a patient has nearly finished growing (usually at 16-18 years of age) treatment planning can be discussed with patients and their families.

## What are the stages of treatment?

Records will be taken of your teeth and face in the form of photographs, X-rays and molds of your teeth.

Meetings with the Psychologist and Speech and Language therapists and Plastic Surgeons, these may be at Broomfield Hospital in Chelmsford.

Meetings with the whole team to discuss treatment options once all the necessary pre-surgical information has been gathered.

Fixed braces are placed by the Orthodontist to straighten your teeth

Removal of any wisdom teeth if necessary

Records will be taken again when you are ready for surgery to carefully plan the procedure on a clinic with all of the team.

Planning for jaw surgery needs multiple appointments.

Jaw surgery will be done by the Consultant Oral & Maxillofacial surgeon

After the jaw surgery the final detailing can be completed with the braces, retainers will be given and then any restorative dental work completed.

### **What does Jaw Surgery involve?**

It may involve surgery to the upper jaw, the lower jaw or both jaws.

Surgery is carried out via cuts inside your mouth.

During the procedure the jaws are placed in the ideal position and held there using plates and screws, which do not normally need removed.

After surgery you may be required to wear orthodontic elastics to help your bite settle into its new position.

### **What are the risks of jaw surgery?**

**Changes to speech:** by working with the speech and language team we hope to advise you of this risk prior to any treatment. The effects may be temporary or may require further investigation and surgical management.

**Numbness to the lips:** this is expected immediately after surgery, it will not change how the lips function only how they feel. In a minority of patients it can persist.

**Infection of the plates under the gum:** in a small number of cases the plates can become infected and need removed, good oral health and no smoking helps reduce the chances of this.

**Relapse:** teeth and jaws can move back to wear they came from. Scar tissue from previous surgeries can cause this to happen more in cleft patients. Rarely this requires further surgery.

The teeth are held with retainers after the braces are removed. If the retainers are not worn the teeth will move and we cannot provide more brace treatment.

**Pain / Discomfort:** normally controlled with pain killers.

### **What are the risks from brace treatment?**

All patients will need to attend for regular appointments to have their braces adjusted, normally every 6-8 weeks.

If your oral health becomes poor, **all treatment** will be stopped to prevent tooth decay, white marks or brown marks on the teeth and gum disease.

Root shortening happens to small degree in all patients but can be more severe in some patients

When treatment is completed all patients will be given retainers to wear to hold their teeth in their corrected position. Please read the leaflets on fixed appliances & retainers for more information.

### **How long is the recovery from jaw surgery?**

Most patients stay in hospital for 1-2 nights. Every patient varies in their recovery time.

Most patients need 2-4 weeks off work or college after the operation.

You will have facial swelling for 4-6 weeks with it being at its worst 36-48 hours after surgery. You will have to attend for regular weekly review appointments after the surgery for the first few weeks.

Our psychology team will review you after surgery, as it is common for patients to feel down after the procedure and as they get used to their new bite and appearance.

If you need further procedures to improve the appearance of your nose or lips or to improve your speech, these will be planned with the rest of the team once your recovery is complete.

### **What care do I need after surgery?**

Patients need to maintain a soft diet such as, soups and smoothies, as the bones heal in their new position.

Weight loss can happen after surgery

After 6 weeks, once the bones have healed a normal diet can be resumed.

Tooth brushing and good oral hygiene is extremely important after surgery and should be started as soon as possible after the operation.

Advice on pain killers will be given when you are discharged from hospital

Further information can be found on:

<https://www.bos.org.uk/Your-Jaw-Surgery>

<https://www.clapa.com/treatment/teenagers-13-18/jaw-surgery/>

### **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

Please contact us if you need general information or advice about Trust services:

[www.bartshealth.nhs.uk/pals](http://www.bartshealth.nhs.uk/pals)

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