

Orthognathic Surgery

Introduction

The following information is to help you understand why you have been referred to the orthognathic clinic. This clinic is held jointly by the consultant orthodontist and consultant oral & maxillofacial surgeon.

What is orthognathic surgery?

It is elective jaw surgery, this means it is entirely your choice to have orthognathic surgery. It involves a combination of orthodontics (braces) and surgery to the bones of the face to correct the balance between the upper jaw (maxilla) and lower jaw (mandible). The jaw bones are moved and fixed into their new position with metal plates, that stay in permanently in the majority of patients. It is carried out in patients who have stopped growing and aims to:

- Straighten the teeth
- Improve the relationship between the upper and lower jaws
- Improve the facial appearance
- Improve function or 'the bite'

Why do I need orthognathic surgery?

Faces grow and change as a person matures. Sometimes the bones of the face don't grow in harmony; one jaw can grow too much, not enough, or differently on the right and left side of the face.

This can affect the way your face and teeth look and your bite. Orthodontics alone will not correct this and surgery will be required to put the supporting bones of the jaw in the correct position.

Will I be in pain after the surgery?

There will be some pain and discomfort especially during the first 24 hours, but this will be controlled with pain relief medication. The face will be swollen, but this will reduce over the first two weeks. However, some residual swelling may remain for up to three months after the operation.

Can I eat and talk after the surgery?

Initially it will be quite difficult to speak and eat. As the swelling reduces this will become easier. For the first six weeks you will need a soft diet as the bone heals.

Are there any risks?

- The risks associated with the surgery will be discussed with you at the orthognathic clinic and include:
- General anaesthetic
- Stiches inside your mouth
- Swelling and bruising
- Bleeding and discomfort
- Nerve damage- it is common to experience temporary numbness or tingling in the lower lip, tongue, teeth or palate depending on the type of surgery. In a small number of patients this can be permanent. This does not affect movement, only the feeling (similar way to an injection at the dentist)
- Jaw or muscle tenderness
- Infection
- Temporary speech or hearing problems (upper jaw surgery only)
- Jaw joint symptoms

Will I have any scars?

Your operation will take place under general anaesthetic and normally all the surgery takes place inside the mouth so there are no visible scars. In some occasions a small cut may be made in between the eyebrows, which will require one stitch. This usually heals with no scar.

The small metal plates sit beneath the skin of the mouth and cannot be seen except on an x-ray. They are only removed in a small number of cases when they cause irritation (5%).

Will I look like me after the surgery?

The amount that your face changes depends on the amount of movement of the jaws to correct their position in the face. You will still look like you, however, the balance of the face will be more harmonious, particularly when you look at your side profile.

How much time would I need to take off work/school?

The majority of patients stay in hospital the day before the surgery. You will meet the ward staff and surgical team prior to the operation and the procedure will be explained to you. You can expect to stay in hospital for one-two nights after the surgery, however everyone responds differently and some patients may require

more or less time.

How long will I have to wear my braces? How long does treatment take?

Prior to jaw surgery you will be required to wear fixed orthodontic appliances for approximately 12-18 months. The braces will remain in place during the surgery, and for about 4-6 months after surgery to ensure the teeth are aligned and fit together. It is important to attend the orthodontic department to review progress approximately every 6- 8 weeks throughout your treatment. In the weeks before and after your surgery you will need additional appointments with the surgical and orthodontic teams.

What do I have to do before I can have treatment?

You need to ensure that your teeth and gums are healthy and be registered with a dentist for regular check-ups. Once you have decided to have treatment you will be placed on a waiting list (provided you have stopped growing which is around aged 18 to 21 years).

Please note:

- **You must also read our Leaflets on Fixed Appliances and How to Keep Your Teeth Clean And Healthy During Your Brace Treatment**

More information can be found at www.yourjawsurgery.com

on the British Orthodontic Society Website.

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