

## Why is treatment necessary?

When your jaw has been broken it is very painful and you will not be able to bite your teeth together properly. It is necessary to fix the bones of your jaw together in the correct position in order to regain your normal bite, so that you can eat properly.

## How is it done?

The treatment will be carried out under a general anaesthetic and you will need to stay in hospital for 1 or 2 nights. You will have one of the following 2 procedures:-

- **Metal Plates**

Most fractures of the jaw are fixed with small metal plates. It is necessary to cut the gums inside your mouth to expose the fractured bones. The metal plates are screwed into the bones on either side of the fracture and this holds the bones firmly together (a process called "Open Reduction and Internal Fixation"). The gums will be stitched in place with dissolvable stitches, once the plates are in the correct position.

Sometimes it is very difficult to place the screws through the metal plates at the back of your mouth and it may be necessary to make one or more small

incisions through your cheek, from the outside, in order to gain access. The stitches in your cheek would be removed after 5-7 days.

- **Jaws Wired Together**

Sometimes fractures of the jaw occur nearer to the jaw joint. It is very difficult to place metal plates in this region so it may be necessary to wire your jaws together for several weeks. A metal bar will be attached to the teeth in both jaws by means of small wires, which are wrapped around the teeth. The upper and lower jaws will be joined together with either elastic bands (that are removable) or with wires (that are not removable).

## What happens afterwards?

You will stay in hospital for at least one night after the operation. You will be given antibiotics and painkillers. Your jaw will feel swollen, bruised and painful and you will find it difficult to open your mouth properly. It is very likely that you will have some numbness/tingling of your lower lip and chin (similar to the sensation of a dental injection). Your bite may not feel completely normal due to the swelling and bruising.

Before you are discharged from hospital you will have some x-rays taken of your jaw to ensure that the bones have been fixed in the correct position.

It is necessary for you to consume a liquid diet for the first few days and you will be given information about this and how to keep your mouth clean. You are strongly advised to avoid smoking after the operation as this could cause an infection.

## What happens to the metal plates and jaw-wires afterwards?

The metal plates are usually left inside your jaw permanently. However, occasionally, the plates may become infected, break or just feel uncomfortable. In this case it would be necessary to remove the plates. This would be done under either a general or local anaesthetic.

The jaw wires will need to be removed. This is usually done under a local anaesthetic, 6 weeks after the surgery.

## What are the risks?

As with any type of surgery, certain problems could occur following the operation:-

### Infection

This may occur several days after the operation. Your mouth would feel increasingly swollen, tender and you would have a nasty taste. It is very important to keep your mouth clean and refrain from smoking in the days immediately after the operation.

### • Numbness

There are several nerves in your jaw which are commonly bruised /damaged when a jaw breaks and is subsequently repaired. This results in numbness/ tingling of the skin surrounding your lower lip and chin. The numbness may last for several weeks or months and there is a small chance that it may be permanent.

### • Broken Teeth

It is very probable that some of your teeth may be damaged when you break your jaw. If this is the case, it may be necessary to remove the damaged teeth at the same time that we operate on your jaw. If not, we recommend that you see your dentist as soon as possible to carry out any necessary dental treatment.

### • Jaw fails to heal

Very occasionally the broken bones in your jaw fail to heal together after the operation. If this were to happen, it would be necessary to repeat the surgery.

**If you have any questions  
about this information leaflet  
please contact the Oral &  
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Department**

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**PATIENT  
INFORMATION**

# Treatment of Jaw Fractures