



Patient & Family Guide
2022

Corrective Jaw Surgery (Orthognathic Surgery)

VG Site



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Corrective Jaw Surgery (Orthognathic Surgery)

Corrective jaw surgery corrects jaw deformities. This is done to prevent damage to your jaw joints, teeth, and muscles. Corrective jaw surgery is also used to treat obstructive sleep apnea (OSA). You will need to stay in the hospital for several days after your surgery.

Day of surgery

- **Do not eat or drink anything after midnight the night before surgery. Your surgery will be cancelled if you eat or drink after this time.** If you eat or drink, you are more likely to have nausea (upset stomach) and vomiting (throwing up) during or shortly after surgery.
- **Stop smoking at least 24 hours (1 day) before surgery.** Smoking can make your recovery harder and can slow down healing. Smoking is not allowed anywhere on the hospital grounds. This includes electronic cigarettes.
- Brush your teeth before coming to the hospital. **Do not swallow any water.**



- Come to the hospital 3 hours before your appointment time. Go to the Same Day Surgery Unit on the 10th floor of the Victoria Building, Victoria General site.
- **Do not** bring valuables (like cash or jewelry) to the hospital. The hospital is not responsible for the loss of any item.
- The nurse will ask you questions about your health and check your vital signs (temperature, blood pressure, pulse, and breathing).
- Tell the nurse if you have any medication or food allergies.
- You may need blood tests.
- The oral surgeon will talk with you, if they have not already done so.
- You will be asked to change into a hospital gown.
- Please give the nurse the name and phone number of the person you want contacted after your surgery.
- You will have an intravenous (IV) inserted (put in) into a vein in your arm to give you medications and fluids.

Note: You will be in the operating room (OR) and recovery area for 4 to 8 hours. The length of time depends on the type of surgery you are having. When your surgery is done, the surgeon will contact the person you have asked them to before surgery.

After your surgery

- You will be taken to the recovery area. You will stay there for 2 to 4 hours, depending on the length of your surgery.
- The nurses will check your vital signs several times during your stay. This is normal.
- You will get medications to make you comfortable, lower swelling, prevent nausea, and help with nasal congestion (stuffy nose). These medications will be given through your IV until you are drinking well.
- A nurse will help you to the bathroom until you are steady on your feet.
- Facial swelling can increase (go up) over 3 days. Then it will slowly go down over 3 to 4 weeks. Ice packs will be placed on your face for the first 48 hours (2 days) to help control swelling.
- You may have bruising.

- A small amount of blood will ooze from your mouth and nose for the first 2 days. This is normal. **If bleeding from your mouth or nose starts once you are home, call the Oral Surgery Clinic right away.**
 - › **8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday to Friday**
Phone: 902-473-5238
 - › **Outside the above hours, or if the above number is busy, call and ask for the oral surgery resident on call.**
Phone: 902-473-2222
- There may be tape above and below your lips. This helps with healing. You will be told when it can be taken off.
- Your jaws may be fixed together with elastics or wires. This lets the bones heal properly.
- You may find it hard to swallow and talk if your jaws are fixed together. This will get better after a couple of days.
- You may vomit. **Do not panic.** There are many spaces between your teeth, even when they are wired together. These spaces will let the vomit out. The nurse will help you.
- When you are fully awake and comfortable, you will be taken to your hospital room.

- Once you are in your room, you can have visitors. You may visit with your loved ones, but we must also respect the needs of other patients. **Please ask the nurse about visiting guidelines for your unit.** Visitors may be asked to leave when the doctors or nurses come to see you or another patient.
- You will be encouraged to drink fluids. Your IV will be taken out only when all of the IV medications have been given and you are drinking enough fluids.
- Once you feel steady on your feet, you will be encouraged to get up and walk. You may need help walking on the first day.
- A dietitian will talk with you about what you can and cannot eat while you heal. If possible, have the person who cooks your meals at this meeting.
- **It is very important to rinse your mouth as you are told.** The surgeon and residents will talk about mouth care with you. You must keep your mouth clean to prevent infection. **Do not brush your teeth until your surgeon says it is OK.** Brushing your teeth too soon after surgery can damage the stitches in your mouth.

- You will be given lip and jaw exercises to do. These exercises help the soft tissue around your mouth area to heal.
- If your lips are dry, ask the nurse for cream or ointment.
- The resident surgeons will visit you every morning. Please tell them if you have any concerns or problems.
- The surgeon can only estimate how many days you will be in the hospital. You will be discharged only when you are eating and drinking well and are comfortable.
- **Your surgery included the surgical cutting of bones. Like a bone fracture, it will take many months for the bones to completely heal. During this time, avoid activities that may injure the surgery site.**

At home

Prescriptions

You will be given prescriptions depending on your surgery and other medical conditions. This usually includes pain medications and an antibacterial mouth rinse to help prevent infection. Use the prescriptions as told by your health care team.



**Do not drink alcohol while taking pain pills.
Do not drive while taking pain pills.**

Oral (mouth) hygiene

Keeping your mouth clean after surgery is important to prevent infection and tooth decay. You can start brushing your teeth with a soft toothbrush in an up and down motion. Using an up and down motion will help prevent accidentally removing elastics. Rinse with salt water after meals to help get rid of any food.



Eating guidelines

- Eat foods that are blended or liquid for the next 4 to 6 weeks.
- **Do not drink alcohol while your jaws are wired.** It is important to drink lots of clear fluids while you heal. Choose drinks that are high in calories right after surgery.
- After 4 to 6 weeks, your health care team will tell you what else you can eat.
- **Do not chew before your surgeon says it is OK.** This may cause you to need another surgery.

Activity

- For at least 2 weeks, relax and take it easy. You will have less energy than usual and need more rest.
- After 2 weeks, you may go back to your usual activities. **Avoid contact sports and swimming while your jaws are wired.**
- Short walks can help you feel better as you recover. It is best to have someone help you walk until you feel stronger and more stable (steady).
- **Do not** lift anything heavier than 20 pounds for 4 weeks after your surgery.
- After 2 weeks, you can do light cardiovascular (cardio) exercise if you feel well enough. If you feel lightheaded or dizzy, stop the activity right away. Sit or lay down until the feeling goes away.

Lip exercises

- If you had upper jaw (maxillary) surgery, you should start doing lip exercises on day 4 after your surgery.
- This includes making a big smile followed by puckering your lips. Repeat these motions for 5 minutes, 5 times a day for the first month after your surgery.

Jaw exercises

- You can start jaw exercises once your surgeon releases your elastics. This is usually 4 to 6 weeks after your surgery.
- Jaw exercises include opening your jaw as wide as you can, holding it open for 10 seconds, then returning to a resting position. Do this exercise 10 times and repeat it 5 times a day.
- It is important to do these exercises in front of a mirror at first. **Keep your jaw straight when opening your mouth. The middle of your bottom teeth should line up with the middle of your top teeth at all times.**

Elastics

- You will have elastics guiding your teeth into their new positions.
- It is common for 1 or 2 elastics to break during the first 2 weeks after surgery.
- If you notice that many elastics have broken, your bite feels different, or your teeth appear to have shifted position, call our office (or your orthodontist's office if you are outside of the Halifax area) to have your bite checked and the elastics replaced.

Nasal congestion

- If you had upper jaw surgery, it is normal to feel very congested (stuffed up) during your recovery. You can keep using the nasal decongestant spray that you were given in the hospital (like Otrivin® or Balminil® DM).
- **Do not** use it more than 3 times a day.
- **Do not** use it more than 4 days in a row, as this can make your nasal congestion worse.
- It may help to use a humidifier in your bedroom to moisten the air. A saline (salt water) nasal rinse may also help. **Do not blow your nose until your surgeon tells you it is OK.**

Scissors

- You were given scissors to release your elastics in case of an emergency. Staff will show you and your support person how to use the scissors before discharge. **Keep the scissors close to you at all times while your elastics are in place.**
- Usually, your elastics **do not** need to be cut if you vomit, unless you are having trouble breathing.

- In the unlikely event you lose consciousness (pass out or faint), you will need to have the elastics cut to help you breathe.
- **If you have trouble breathing, cut the elastics and call the oral surgery resident on call.**
 - › Phone: 902-473-2222

Nosebleeds

- The breathing tube used during your surgery went through your nose. This can lead to nosebleeds after surgery.
- If you had upper jaw surgery, you will likely have small, short nosebleeds as you recover.
- If you have a nosebleed, it is best to sit with your head slightly forward and apply firm pressure with gauze or a towel to close the bottom of your nose. Keep pressure on your nose for at least 15 minutes.
- Serious nosebleeds can sometimes happen. If you see a lot of bright red blood coming from the front of your nose that does not stop with pressure, or you feel that a large amount of blood is going into your throat:
 - › Keep pressure on your nose, cut your elastics, and call the oral surgery resident on call to ask what you should do.

Infection

- Tell your oral surgeon about any signs of infection you have. These include:
 - › Fever (temperature above 38° C/100.4° F)
 - › Chills
 - › More pain
 - › Swelling

Vomiting

You may vomit after you go home, but it is not common. If you vomit, lean forward with your head down to let the vomit out. **Do not** cut your elastics, unless you are having trouble breathing.

**What are your questions? Please ask.
We are here to help you.**

**In Nova Scotia you can call 811 to talk with
a registered nurse about your health care
questions 24/7.**

Discharge checklist

- Have the surgeons told you that you are ready for discharge?
- Do you have someone to drive you home?
- Have you had X-rays taken after surgery?
- Has the dietitian talked with you about what you can eat and drink for the next 4 to 6 weeks?
- Do you have a follow-up appointment at the Oral Surgery Clinic?
- Have you been given instructions from the oral surgeons about your care at home?
- If your jaws are held together with elastics, have you been given a pair of scissors and instructions about how to use them?
- Have you been given prescriptions for pain and discomfort?
- Have the surgeons suggested when you can return to work or school and your usual activities?

If you have urgent questions or concerns or any of the following symptoms:

- › Bleeding from your wound or nose
- › Trouble swallowing or breathing
- › A lot of nausea and/or vomiting
- › Pain that is getting worse or not getting better
- › A lot more swelling
- › Shift in bite position (how your teeth fit together)
- › Fever (temperature over 38° C/100.4° F)
- › Loss of several elastics or wires that causes your jaw to move

8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday to Friday:

- › Phone: 902-473-5238

We will return your message as soon as possible.

Outside above hours or if line is busy:

- › Phone: 902-473-2222

Ask for the oral surgery resident on call. Stay on the line and the resident will be with you shortly.

Non-urgent questions

Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Clinic
(8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday to Friday):

> Phone: 902-473-2070

We will return your message as soon as possible.

Looking for more health information?

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here: <https://library.nshealth.ca/PatientEducation>

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.

For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time: call 811 or visit <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

Nova Scotia Health promotes a smoke-free, vape-free, and scent-free environment.

Please do not use perfumed products. Thank you!

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Prepared by: Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, QEII

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.