

2015

Tumour and Reconstructive Surgery of the Mouth and Jaw



Tumour and Reconstructive Surgery of the Mouth and Jaw

A variety of lesions may affect the mouth and jaw. These lesions may damage surrounding bone and/or soft tissue. Surgery is often needed to manage these conditions and reconstruct the defects they produce.

Please note that some tumour and reconstructive surgery does not require an overnight stay in hospital. You will be told before your surgery date if you will need to stay in hospital after your operation.

This pamphlet was written to explain what you can expect if you are having tumour and/or reconstructive surgery.

This pamphlet is just a guide. If you have questions, please talk to your healthcare provider. We are here to help you.

The day before surgery

- Stop smoking at least 24 hours before your operation. Smoking can make your recovery harder and can delay healing. Smoking is not allowed anywhere on the grounds of the hospital. This includes e-cigarettes.
- **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.** Nausea and vomiting may occur during or shortly after your operation.

The day of surgery

- You will be asked to arrive at the hospital at least 1 ½ hours before your operation. You will go to the Same Day Surgery Unit on the **10th floor of the Victoria Building, Victoria General Hospital site.**
- **Note to patients not staying overnight in hospital: You will need to have someone take you home after your operation. Your surgery will be cancelled if you do not have a drive home. Under no circumstance will you be allowed to drive yourself home, as you are legally impaired for 24 hours.**

- Do not bring valuables to the hospital. The hospital is not responsible for them.
- The nurse will ask you several health questions and take your vital signs.
- Be sure to tell the nurse if you have any food or drug allergies.
- You may need some blood tests.
- The oral surgeon may speak with you unless he or she has already done so.
- You will be asked to change into a hospital gown. Please do not wear any undergarments.
- Please give the nurse the name and phone number of the person you want contacted after your surgery.
- **Note to those waiting:** The length of time needed to do the procedure depends on the type of surgery required. The surgeon will give you a time estimate before the procedure starts. At the end of the procedure, the surgeon will contact a friend or family member when asked to do so by the patient.

After your surgery

- You will be taken to the recovery area. You will stay there for 1-4 hours depending on the length of your surgery.
- The nurses will take your vital signs several times during recovery. This is normal.
- You will get medications to make you comfortable, prevent nausea, and help reduce facial swelling. These medications will be given by intravenous (IV) until you are drinking well.
- Until you are steady on your feet, a nurse will help you to the bathroom.
- Facial swelling will go up over 3 days and will gradually go down over 3-4 weeks. Ice packs may be used for the first 24 hours to help with swelling.
- Minor operations do not require an overnight hospital stay. Once you are fully awake, you will be brought to the post-recovery room. You will receive home care instructions and be given any required prescriptions before leaving. Remember, you will be legally impaired and a driver must take you home.
- If you are staying in hospital overnight, you will be brought to your hospital room once you are fully awake and comfortable.

- Once you are in your room, you can have visitors. We will try to accommodate your needs and your family's needs for contact. We also must respect the rights and needs of other patients. Please check with the nurses about visiting guidelines for your unit. Visitors may be asked to leave when the doctors or nurses come to see you.
- You will be encouraged to drink fluids. The IV will be taken out only when all the IV medications have been given and you are drinking enough fluids.
- If bone was taken from your hip or skin was taken from your thigh, you will have dressings over these areas. You may find it uncomfortable to walk for several days. This will get better.
- If a rib was taken from your chest, you will have a dressing over this area. You may find it uncomfortable to breathe deeply for several days. This will get better.
- A dietitian will talk with you about what you can and cannot eat during the healing period. If possible, have the person who will be cooking your meals at this meeting.
- It is very important to rinse your mouth as instructed. The surgeon and residents will

talk about mouth care with you. Keeping your mouth clean after surgery is necessary to prevent infection.

- The resident surgeons will see 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 hospital.
- You will be discharged home only when you are eating and drinking well and are comfortable.
- If bone was taken from your hip/chest or a skin graft was taken from your thigh, you will be asked by the surgeons to AVOID taking a bath for a period of time. It is OK to take a shower.

Discharge checklist

- Have the surgeons told you that you are ready for discharge home?
- Have you arranged for a drive home?
- Have you had X-rays taken after surgery?
- Has the dietitian spoken with you?
- Have you received a follow-up appointment for the Oral Surgery Clinic?
- Have you received instructions from the oral surgeons about your care at home?
- Have you been told when to have your stitches removed?
- Do you have your prescriptions?

Questions or concerns once you are home

Urgent questions

If you experience any of the following:

- Bleeding from the wound
- Discharge from the wound
- Difficulty swallowing or breathing
- Significant nausea and/or vomiting
- Increasing pain or pain not improving
- Significant increase in swelling
- Fever

Call 902-473-5238 between 8:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., Monday to Friday. Messages will be returned as soon as possible.

If it's busy or outside of the above hours, call 902-473-2222 and ask for the oral surgery resident on call. Stay on the line and the resident will be with you shortly.

Non-urgent questions

Call the Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Clinic, Victoria General site between 8:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., Monday to Friday.

The phone number is 902-473-2070. Messages will be returned as soon as possible.

Looking for more health information?

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.
For more information go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

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Please do not use perfumed products. Thank you!*

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The information in this brochure is for informational and educational purposes only.
The information is not intended to be and does not constitute healthcare or medical advice.
If you have any questions, please ask your healthcare provider.

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