

Corrective Jaw Surgery (Orthognathic Surgery)

Victoria General (VG)
Site

Corrective Jaw Surgery (Orthognathic Surgery)

Corrective jaw surgery improves the position of your jaw. It can protect your jaw joints, teeth, and muscles from damage. Corrective jaw surgery is also used to treat obstructive sleep apnea (OSA).

You will need to stay in the hospital for 24 to 48 hours (1 to 2 days) after your surgery to recover. When you will be discharged depends on your healing and recovery.

Before your surgery

- Please read pamphlet 1395, *Planning for Your Hospital Stay After Surgery*, for important information about getting ready for surgery. This pamphlet has information about:
 - › How to confirm the time of your surgery
 - › How to get ready on the day and night before your surgery
 - › What items you should and **should not** bring with you to the hospital
- Ask a member of your health care team for a copy of this pamphlet.

- You can also scan the QR code below or visit:
 - › www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources/1395

Scan the QR code on your device (open the camera on your device, point the camera at the code, and tap the banner or border that appears)



Day of surgery

- Brush your teeth before coming to the hospital. **Do not** swallow any water.
- If you have Invisalign trays, bring these with you to the hospital.

After your surgery

- You will wake up in the Post-Anesthetic Care Unit (PACU). The length of your stay will depend on your surgery and how you are feeling.

- The nurses in the PACU will closely monitor your:
 - › Temperature
 - › Blood pressure
 - › Pulse
 - › Breathing
 - › Oxygen levels
 - › Pain
 - › Nausea (upset stomach)
 - › I.V.(s)
- You will get medication to help make you comfortable and to lower swelling. You will get these medications through an I.V. until you are able to drink well. You may also get medication through your nose to help with nasal congestion (stuffed up nose).
- When you are fully awake and comfortable, you will be taken to your hospital room.
- A nurse will help you go to the bathroom until you are steady on your feet.

Visitors

- You may have visitors in your hospital room. Ask your nurse about visiting guidelines for your unit. Please remember to respect the needs of other patients (like quiet time for rest, or making room for their health care team) when you have visitors.

Post-operative recovery

Jaw

- Your jaws may be fixed together with elastics. This lets your bones heal properly.
- You may find it hard to swallow and talk if your jaws are fixed together. This will get easier after a few days.
- If you vomit (throw up), **do not** panic. Your nurse will help you. There are many spaces between your teeth, even when your jaws are fixed together. These spaces will let anything you bring up come out safely.

Swelling and bruising

- Swelling of your face can get worse for the first 3 days after surgery. It will slowly go down over the next 3 to 4 weeks.
- Use an ice pack on your face for the first 48 hours (2 days) after surgery. This will help to lower swelling.
- You may have some bruising on your face. The bruising may get darker during the first week after surgery. Then, it will start to fade. This is a part of healing and will get better with each day.

Bleeding

- You may have a small amount of bleeding from your mouth and nose for the first 2 days after your surgery. This is common. It should slowly stop as you heal.

Your recovery in the hospital

- You will be encouraged to drink fluids by mouth as soon as you can. The nursing staff will show you how to use syringes to help you drink. Your I.V. will stay in place while you are in the hospital. It will be taken out just before you are discharged.
- 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.

Rinse your mouth as instructed by your health care team. This is very important.

- Your oral surgeon and residents (doctors training to specialize in oral surgery) will tell you how to care for your mouth. Keeping your mouth clean helps prevent infection.
- **Do not** brush your teeth until after your surgeon says it is safe to do so. 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, use Vaseline®.
- Residents will visit you every morning. Please tell them if you have any concerns or notice any changes.
- You will be discharged when you are eating and drinking well and are comfortable.

At home

- **Healing from your surgery will take several months.**
- Your surgery involved cutting bones and putting them in different positions. Like a broken bone, it will take several months for the bones to fully heal.
- **During this time, avoid any activities that could injure your jaw or face, like sports.**

Medications

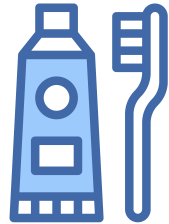
- You will be prescribed medications to help you recover after surgery. These typically include pain medication and an antibacterial mouth rinse to help prevent infection. **Take all medications exactly as your health care team tells you.**

While you are taking pain medication:

- **Do not** drink alcohol.
- **Do not** drive.

Oral (mouth) hygiene

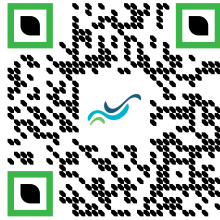
- **Keeping your mouth clean after surgery is important to prevent infection and tooth decay.**
- After you are discharged, you can start brushing your teeth gently with a soft toothbrush using an up and down motion. This helps to prevent the elastics from coming loose.
- Rinse your mouth with salt water after meals to remove food and keep your mouth clean.



Eating guidelines

- For the next 4 to 6 weeks, eat foods that are blended or liquid. You can use a syringe to help you eat.
 - › **Do not** use a straw.
- **Do not** drink alcohol while your jaws are fixed.
- Choose drinks that are high in calories and protein to help your body recover after surgery.
- It is important to drink lots of clear fluids while you heal.
- After 4 to 6 weeks, your health care team will tell you when you can start eating other foods. **Do not chew until your surgeon says it is safe to do so.** Chewing too soon can slow your healing and may cause problems that could lead to another surgery.
- Please read pamphlet 0566, *Nutrition Guidelines After Jaw Surgery*, for important information about eating and nutrition after jaw surgery.
- Ask a member of your health care team for a copy of this pamphlet.

- You can also scan the QR code below or visit:
 - › www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources/0566



Activity

- For at least 2 weeks after surgery, relax and take it easy. You may have less energy than usual and will need more rest. Your surgeon will tell you when and how to slowly return to your normal activities.
- **Do not** lift anything heavier than 20 pounds for 4 weeks (1 month) after surgery.
- **Do not** play contact sports (like football, hockey, or boxing) or swim until your surgeon says it is safe.
- Short walks can help you feel better as you recover. Have someone walk with you until you feel strong and steady.
- After a few weeks, you may start light cardiovascular (cardio) exercises. If you feel dizzy or lightheaded, stop right away. Sit or lie down until you feel better.

Lip exercises

- You should start doing lip exercises after your surgery. To do these exercises:
 1. Make a big smile, then pucker your lips.
 2. Repeat these movements for 5 minutes, 5 times a day, during the first month after your surgery.

Jaw exercises

- You can start jaw exercises once your surgeon cuts your elastics. This is usually 4 to 6 weeks after your surgery. To do these exercises:
 1. Open your jaw as wide as you can. Hold it open for 10 seconds, then relax your jaw to a resting position.
 2. Repeat this exercise 10 times, 5 times a day.
- When you are doing jaw exercises:
 - › Keep your jaw straight when you open your mouth. The middle of your bottom teeth should always line up with the middle of your top teeth.
 - › Do these exercises in front of a mirror at first so you can check that your jaw is straight, and your teeth are lined up.

Elastics

- You will have elastics on your teeth. They help guide your teeth into their new positions.
- It is common for 1 or 2 elastics to break during the first 2 weeks after surgery. This is common. If this happens, try not to worry.
- Call the Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Clinic (see page 16) or your orthodontist's office, if you are outside the Halifax area, if you notice any of the following:
 - › Several elastics have broken
 - › Your bite feels different
 - › Your teeth appear to have shifted (moved)

We will check your bite and replace your elastics.

Nasal congestion

- If you had upper jaw surgery, it is common to feel very congested while you recover. You may be offered a nasal spray (like Otrivin®) to help with this while you are in the hospital. You can continue using this spray at home.
- **Do not** use the spray more than 3 times a day, or for more than 4 days in a row. Using it too often can make your nasal congestion worse.

- It may help to use a humidifier in your bedroom to keep the air moist. A saline (salt water) nasal rinse may also help you breathe more easily.
- **Do not blow your nose until your surgeon tells you it is safe to do so.**

Scissors

- You will be given scissors to cut your elastics in case of an emergency.
- Staff will show you and your support person how to use the scissors before you are discharged.
- **Keep the scissors with 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.
- If you faint, the elastics may need to be cut to help you breathe.



- **If you have trouble breathing, cut the elastics right away and call locating. Ask for the oral surgery resident on call.**
 - › Phone: 902-473-2222
 - › Stay on the phone and the resident will be with you shortly.

Nosebleeds

- The breathing tube used during your surgery went through your nose. This can lead to some nosebleeds after surgery.
- If you had upper jaw surgery, it is common to have small, short nosebleeds while you recover.
- If you have a nosebleed:
 1. Sit with your head slightly forward and apply firm pressure to the bottom of your nose with gauze or a towel.
 2. Keep steady pressure for at least 15 minutes.
- Sometimes, serious nosebleeds can happen.

If you notice a lot of bright red blood coming from the front of your nose that **does not** stop with pressure, or if you feel blood going into your throat:

1. Keep firm pressure on your nose.
2. Cut your elastics if you are having trouble breathing.
3. **Right away, call locating and ask for the oral surgery resident on call:**
 - › Phone: 902-473-2222
 - › Stay on the phone and the resident will be with you shortly.

Infection

- Tell your surgeon right away if you have any signs of infection. These can include:
 - › Fever (temperature above 38 °C or 100.4 °F)
 - › Chills
 - › More pain
 - › More swelling

Vomiting

- You may vomit after you are discharged, but this is uncommon. If you vomit:
 - › Lean forward with your head down to let the vomit come out easily.
 - › **Do not** cut your elastics unless you are having trouble breathing.

Follow-up appointment

- You will get a follow-up appointment with your surgeon before you are discharged from the hospital.



Discharge checklist

Make sure you can check off each item on this list before you are discharged. Talk with your health care team if you have questions about any item on the list.

- Has your surgeon or resident told you that you are ready for discharge?
- Do you have a responsible adult to take you home?
- Have you had X-rays taken after your surgery?
- Do you have a copy of pamphlet 0566, *Nutrition Guidelines After Jaw Surgery*?
- Do you have a follow-up appointment with your surgeon at the Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Clinic?
- Has your health care team given you instructions for your care at home?
- If your jaws are held together with elastics, have you been given scissors and taught how to use them in an emergency?
- Have you been given prescriptions for pain and other medications?
- Has your surgeon or resident talked with you about when you can go back to work or school?

Call the Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Clinic right away if you have urgent questions or concerns, or if you have any of these symptoms:

- › Bleeding from your mouth or nose
- › Trouble swallowing or breathing
- › Increased nausea or vomiting
- › Pain that is getting worse or not improving
- › A lot more swelling than before
- › Shift in bite position (how your teeth fit together)
- › Fever (temperature above 38 °C or 100.4 °F)
- › Loss of several elastics, causing your jaw to move

Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Clinic

- › Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
(Monday to Friday):
- › Phone: 902-473-5238

For urgent concerns outside clinic hours, call locating and ask to speak to the oral surgery resident on call:

- › Phone: 902-473-2222
- › Stay on the phone and the resident will be with you shortly.

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find all patient education resources here:
www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources

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

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