



Patient & Family Guide
2026

Facial Fractures

Victoria General Site,
QE II



www.nshealth.ca

Facial Fractures — V.G. Site

What is a facial fracture?

- A facial fracture is a break in 1 or more bones in the face. These injuries need medical treatment right away to help prevent serious problems.
- Problems may include:
 - › Changes in the shape or look of your face
 - › Problems with your bite (how your top and bottom teeth fit together)
 - › Infection in the jaw or face
 - › Changes in how your face grows
- Pain and swelling are common after a facial fracture. These symptoms usually improve as the fracture heals and after treatment.
- This pamphlet explains what to expect if you need surgery to fix a facial fracture.

Admission to the hospital

- You will likely be admitted to a hospital room from the Emergency Department or the Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Clinic.



- Your surgeon will give you an estimated surgery date. There may be other patients waiting for emergency surgery. The date of your surgery may change.
- An intravenous (I.V.) will be placed into a vein in your arm or hand. This lets your health care team give you fluids and medications to keep you comfortable.

Before your surgery

- Your health care team will help you get ready and make sure it is safe for you to have surgery.
- The nurse will ask you questions about your health and check your vital signs (like your temperature, blood pressure, pulse, breathing, and oxygen level).
- Tell your health care team if you have any allergies to food or medications.
- You may need blood tests before your surgery.
- Your oral surgeon will talk with you about your surgery, if they have not already done so. They will explain what to expect before, during, and after your surgery.

- **Do not eat or drink** after you are admitted to the hospital unless your surgeon says it is safe. Eating or drinking before surgery raises your risk of serious problems during or after surgery. **Your surgery may be cancelled if you eat or drink.**
- Stop smoking as soon as you can. Smoking can slow healing and make your recovery harder. If you would like help quitting, ask your health care team about nicotine replacement therapy.
- Please give your nurse the name and phone number of your support person to call after your surgery.

Surgery and recovery

- You will be in the operating room (O.R.) and the Post-Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU) for several hours. The amount of time will depend on the type of surgery you are having and how you feel after.
- When your surgery is over, your surgeon will call your support person.

- You will wake up in the PACU. The nurses will monitor you closely, including your:
 - › Temperature
 - › Blood pressure
 - › Pulse
 - › Breathing
 - › Oxygen level
 - › Pain
 - › Nausea (upset stomach)
 - › I.V.
- We will give you medications to keep you comfortable and help lower any swelling. These medications will be given through your I.V. until you are able to drink well.
- 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 respect the needs of other patients (like quiet times for rest, or making room for someone's health care team) when you have visitors.

After your surgery

Jaw

- Your jaws may be held together with elastics. This helps your bones heal in the right position.
- **If your jaws are held together with elastics**, you may find it harder to talk or swallow. This usually gets easier within a few days.
- If you vomit (throw up), **try to stay calm**. Your nurse will help you. Even with elastics, there are spaces between your teeth to let your vomit come out safely.
 - › You **do not** need to cut the elastics.
 - › Make sure you rinse your mouth with water and/or mouthwash to get rid of stomach acid after you vomit.

Swelling and bruising

- Facial swelling 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 each day.

Bleeding

- You may have a small amount of bleeding from your nose or incision (cut) sites for the first 2 days after surgery. This is common and should go away slowly over time.

Your hospital stay

Most people stay in the hospital for 1 night after surgery.

- You will be encouraged to drink fluids as soon as you are able. If needed, your nurse will show you how to use a syringe to help you drink.
- Your I.V. will be taken out before you are discharged home.
- Once you feel steady on your feet, we will encourage you to get up and walk. You may need help the first time you get up.
- A resident doctor will visit you each morning. Tell them if you have any concerns or notice any changes in how you are feeling.
- You can go home when:
 - › You are drinking enough fluids
 - › Your pain is well controlled
 - › Your health care team feels it is safe for you to go home

At home

Medications



- You will be prescribed medications to help you recover. These usually include pain medication and an anti-bacterial 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

- It is important to keep your mouth clean after surgery to help prevent infection.
- It is important to rinse your mouth as shown by your health care team. They will talk with you about how to care for your mouth.
- Unless you have been told not to, gently brush your teeth with a soft-bristled manual toothbrush. Use up-and-down strokes.
 - › **Do not** touch your incisions or stitches.
 - › **Do not** use devices like a Waterpik™, as it can damage your stitches.

Eating guidelines

- **Do not chew food for 6 weeks.** Chewing too soon can slow healing and may cause problems that could lead to more surgery. Your health care team will tell you when it is safe to start chewing again.
- Choose drinks that are high in calories and protein (like smoothies or milkshakes) to help your body heal.
- Drink lots of fluids while you heal. **Do not use a straw.**
- **Do not** drink alcohol. Alcohol slows healing.
- For more information, ask your health care team for pamphlet 0566, *Nutrition Guidelines After Jaw Surgery*, scan the QR code below, or visit:
 - › www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources/0566

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



Activity

- After surgery, you may have less energy than usual and need more rest. **It is important to take it easy, especially for the first few days after surgery.**
- Your surgeon will tell you when and how to slowly go back to your usual activities.
- **Do not** lift anything heavier than 10 pounds for 4 weeks (1 month) after your surgery.
- **Do not** play contact sports (like football, hockey, or boxing) or swim until your surgeon says it is safe.
- **A facial fracture can take many months to fully heal. During this time, avoid activities that could injure your face.**

If your jaws are held together with elastics:

- › It is common for 1 or 2 elastics to break during the first 2 weeks after surgery. If this happens, do not worry. This is not usually a problem.

Call the Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Clinic if:

- › Several elastics have broken
- › Your bite feels different
- › Your teeth have moved

We will give you scissors to cut your elastics in case of an emergency. **Always keep them with you.**

- **If you vomit:**

- › Lean forward with your head down to help the vomit come out more easily
- › **Do not** cut your elastics unless you are having trouble breathing

- **If you have trouble breathing:**

- › **Cut your elastics right away**
- › **Call 902-473-2222 and ask for the oral surgery resident on call**
- › Stay on the phone and follow the resident's instructions

Follow-up appointment

- You will get a follow-up appointment with your surgeon at the Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Clinic 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 any questions.

- ☐ Have your surgeons told you that you are ready for discharge?
- ☐ Do you have someone to drive 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 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 shown how to use them in an emergency?
- ☐ Have you been given prescriptions for pain medication and any other medications you may need?
- ☐ Has your surgeon or a 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, nose, or incision site that does not stop or is getting worse
- › Trouble swallowing or breathing
- › More nausea or vomiting
- › Pain that is getting worse or not getting better
- › Swelling that is not getting better
- › Shift in bite position
- › Fever (temperature above 38 °C or 100.4 °F)
- › Several elastics have broken, 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 for the oral surgery resident on call:

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

If you have non-urgent questions:

- Please call the Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Clinic:
 - › Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.,
Monday to Friday
 - › Phone: 902-473-2070
- We will get back to you as soon as possible.

What are your questions?

Please ask a member of your health care team. We are here to help you.

Notes:

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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