



Patient & Family Guide

2022

# Facial Fractures

## VG Site



[www.nshealth.ca](http://www.nshealth.ca)

# Facial Fractures

A facial bone fracture (break) must be treated to prevent future problems. Problems could include developing facial deformities, dental malocclusions (“bad bite”), jaw infection, or changes in facial growth. **The pain from the broken bone usually gets better as soon as the fracture is repaired.**

This pamphlet explains what to expect if you are having surgery to fix a facial bone fracture.

## Admission to hospital

- You will likely be admitted to a hospital room from the Emergency Department or from the Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Clinic.
- The surgeon can only estimate when your surgery will take place. There are often several patients waiting for emergency surgery.
- An intravenous (IV) needle will be inserted (put in) in a vein in your arm. The nurses and doctors will give you medications through the IV to keep you comfortable.

- **Do not eat or drink after you are admitted to the hospital** unless your surgeon says it is OK. **Your surgery will be cancelled if you eat or drink after you are admitted.** 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 as soon as you are admitted to the hospital.** Smoking can make your recovery harder and can slow down healing. Smoking is not allowed anywhere on the hospital grounds. This includes electronic cigarettes.
- Send any valuables (like cash or jewelry) home with a loved one. 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 **do not** wear any undergarments (underwear, bra).
- Please give the nurse the name and phone number of the person you want contacted after your surgery.

**Note:** You will be in the operating room (OR) and recovery area for 2 to 10 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.

## **After your surgery**

### **Recovery area**

- You will be taken to the recovery area. You will stay there for 2 to 6 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 and prevent nausea. 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 weeks. Ice packs will be placed on your face to help control swelling.
- You may have bruising.
- A small amount of blood will ooze from your nose and incisions (cuts) for the first 2 days. This is normal.
- Your jaws may be fixed together with either 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.

## In 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.
- The resident surgeons will visit you every morning. Please tell them if you have any concerns or problems.
- 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.

- You will not be able to chew solid food for 4 weeks (1 month) if you have a fracture to the jaw joint (condyle), upper jaw (maxilla), or lower jaw (mandible). **Do not** chew before your surgeon says it is OK. Chewing solid food before this time can cause infection of the bone and prevent healing. **This may cause you to need more surgery.**
- **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.
- 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.
- **Facial bone fractures take many months to completely heal. During this time, avoid activities that may injure the surgery site.**

## At home

### Prescriptions



You may be given medications 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.

### 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 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 wired together, have you been given a pair of wire cutters 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 or 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 of 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.

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

# Notes:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**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!*  
[www.nshealth.ca](http://www.nshealth.ca)

*Prepared by:* Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, QEII  
*Designed by:* Nova Scotia Health Library Services

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

WU85-1085 © May 2022 Nova Scotia Health Authority  
The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.

