

Information about Mandible (Bottom Jaw) Fracture

What is it?

Your bottom jaw (Mandible) has been broken (fractured). It holds all your bottom teeth in position, and allows you to open and close your mouth, bite and chew.

Your surgeon will discuss if surgery is a suitable treatment for your injury, discuss any other options, and explain the risks and benefits of each option.

Why do we treat this injury?

- To return the teeth to their original position.
- To align the bones to promote healing
- To reduce the pain of the bones moving.

What are the options?

- No surgery
- Brace type treatment (Arch Bars)
- Plates and screws
- A combination of the above

What does the surgery involve?

You will have a general anaesthetic which means you will be asleep. The surgeon will make incisions (surgical cuts) on the gums inside the mouth, align the bones and teeth and use small metal plates and screws to hold the bones in position, and may place braces if needed to aid healing and alignment of the bones and teeth. The incisions will be closed with dissolving stitches.

What are the risks of surgery?

You will have some pain and swelling after the surgery, though this is usually not severe. There is a risk of the plates becoming infected, or the teeth not aligning as before. The plates are thin, and can bend or move if chewing occurs before the bones have healed, so a non chewing diet is vital. There may be numbness, which can be permanent, of the lower lip and, or tongue. Teeth can be injured by the plates and screws, though that is unusual.....

Will I have a scar on my face?

Some surgical treatments require an incision (surgical cut) on the cheek or neck - your surgeon will discuss this with you before any surgery.

What does surgery not help?

Surgery will not help any numbness of the bottom lip or tongue - this is due to nerve injury, usually as a result of the injury, but surgery can make it worse, especially immediately after the surgery.

Will I need a tooth out?

Sometimes we will need to remove a tooth - your surgeon will discuss the chance of this occurring and explain why.

I've not had surgery - why?

Some fractures are well aligned, and have a very good chance of healing without surgery. You will still need to keep your mouth as clean as possible and eat only non-chewing foods for 6 weeks.

You will receive regular follow-up appointments in case the fractures move, and if that occurs, we can discuss options again.

I've had surgery - what now?

- Your surgeon will explain what was done and why.
- Usually you will not need antibiotics or an x-ray following surgery, but your surgeon will confirm this.
- You will go home once you are eating and drinking adequately, and your pain is controlled with simple painkillers.
- You will need to follow a non-chewing diet for six weeks.
- You should keep your mouth as clean as possible to reduce the risk of infection.
- You can return to work once you are managing the pain - usually within 7-10 days of surgery, depending on the nature of your work.

Exercise

We recommend that you avoid sports for 6 weeks after your injury or surgery, but you should avoid contact sports for 3 months.

Will I need further appointments?

You will have regular follow up appointment to make sure your fracture is healing.

Any questions

This leaflet is a guide and if you have any specific questions please discuss these with the surgical team.

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