

Bimaxillary Osteotomy (1 of 4)



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The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk if you would like a reference list.

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Bimaxillary Osteotomy - surgery on the bones of the upper jaw (maxilla) and lower jaw (mandible).

This leaflet has been designed to improve your understanding of your forthcoming treatment and contains answers to many of the common questions. If you have any other questions or would like further explanation, please ask your surgeon or orthodontist.

Why do I need surgery?

It has not been possible to correct facial appearance and how your teeth bite together with orthodontics alone. This is because the bones of your face and jaws are out of balance with one another. This surgery aims to change the relationship between your lower and upper jaw to correct the imbalance. An osteotomy is an operation where a bone is cut to shorten, lengthen, or change its alignment. The surgery will take place under a general anaesthetic, i.e. you will be asleep.

Before your operation

A number of additional appointments are necessary so that we can plan your operation in detail. We will need to take a set of impressions (moulds) and further measurements. This usually requires two appointments. We will also ask you to come to a pre-operative assessment clinic where MRSA screening will take place as well as blood tests.

What does the operation involve?

The operation is normally performed inside your mouth to minimise visible scars on the skin of your face. A cut is made through the gum behind the back teeth to gain access to the jaw bone and above the roots of the top teeth to access the upper jaw bone. The upper and lower jaws are cut, moved into their new position and held in place with small metal plates and screws. These are usually permanent. The gums are stitched back into place with dissolvable stitches.

The metal that is used is titanium, which does not set off metal detectors in airports.

Occasionally the surgeon will need to make a small incision in each cheek when doing your operation. If this happens you will have two small stitches that will be removed at your one week post-operative review.

What can I expect after the operation?

You will wake up in the recovery area where nurses will monitor your pulse, blood pressure, temperature and pain levels. You will also have a hilotherm mask on which will help keep you comfortable and help reduce swelling.

You may wake up to find elastic bands connected to the teeth of the upper and lower jaw. Please don't be alarmed. These help keep your jaws in the correct healing position but do restrict your ability to open your mouth. If wires are used to maintain the alignment of your jaws you won't be able to open your mouth but this is unlikely. There may also be a plastic wafer between the teeth to help you bite into the new position.

Immediately after the operation your face will be swollen and feel tight. Your jaws will be stiff and you will find that you cannot open your mouth. Your throat may be sore and swallowing can be difficult to begin with.

Swelling and bruising varies but generally worst on the second or third day after the operation. The swelling can be reduced by using cold compresses and sleeping propped upright for a few days. Most of the swelling will disappear after a fortnight but there is often some subtle swelling that can take several months to go down. You may choose to hire the Hilotherm machine to take home with you following your operation.

Your face and jaw may be sore but this can be controlled with regular dissolvable painkillers (analgesics). These are normally paracetamol and ibuprofen or voltarol depending if you are sensitive or not to non steroidal analgesics. Please follow the instructions on the packets. You should expect to need to take regular painkillers for 5 to 7 days after the operation. The discomfort is usually worse for the first few days although it may take a couple of weeks to completely disappear. If you need extra pain relief please contact your GP. Please do not contact the Emergency Department for further pain relief.

To reduce the risks of wound infection and to promote healing, you will be given antibiotics through a vein in your arm. You will be sent home with a course of antibiotics in liquid form.

You will have a blocked nose and blood stained discharge from your nose or mouth for a few days. This is normal. **DO NOT BLOW YOUR NOSE** after your operation. It is normal to feel low or even tearful a couple of days after this operation.

Can I eat normally after surgery?

To begin with, no. For the first week you will only want liquids. You might find drinking difficult as your lips may be numb and swollen causing dribbling. To reduce this we recommend using a child's drinks beaker which controls the liquid flow. Alternatively 20ml to 50ml syringes with a plastic quill or straw may be used to squirt liquids into the mouth. The ward or your local chemist can supply these.

During the first week you might like to try meal supplements like Complian Shake or Fortisip to maintain nutritional input and reduce the risk of weight loss. Try a few of the supplements from the chemist before surgery to find out which flavours you like or don't mind!

You should be able to manage a pureed or soft diet by the end of the first week after

surgery, gradually building up to normal food over 6 weeks.

If wires have been used to secure your jaws you won't be able to chew but should be able to manage supplements and pureed diet. The wires may be in place for 4- 5 weeks. This may seem a long time but its important not to place stress on the screws and plates that are holding the jaw in place. You will be given an advice sheet on the most appropriate foods and how to prepare them. Please phone the dietitian with any questions. Contact details are at the end of this leaflet.

How should I keep my mouth clean after surgery

In much the same way as before. Use a small headed tooth brush to clean round any wires and elastic bands. You will need to use a chlorhexidine (Corsodyl) mouth wash 3 times a day or after meals until the gums are healed. This lowers the levels of bacteria in the mouth reducing the risk of infection. This should be bought from the chemist before your surgery. We advise you to brush your teeth before using the corsodyl mouthwash as this reduces the amount of staining caused. Warm salt water mouth washes are also useful at regular intervals or after supplements to remove food particles. Vaseline can be used to reduce dry, cracked lips.

Drinking alcohol and smoking should be avoided after your surgery. Smoking significantly reduces blood supply in the mouth and slows down the healing process. Patients who smoke are at much higher risk of infection and problems after the operation.

How long will I be in hospital?

We aim to discharge you the day after your operation but only if you are able to drink enough, your pain is controlled and you can walk to the toilet. Before you leave hospital the position of your jaws will be checked with X-rays and fine adjustments may be needed to any elastic bands.

When can I resume normal activities?

The length of time that you should arrange to have off work varies from person to person and depends on what kind of job you do. We recommend that most people have 2 to 3 weeks off work. The ward can give you a Statement of Fitness for Work (fit note) if you need one. It is important to remember that you will not be able to drive or operate machinery for 48 hours after your general anaesthetic.

Do not do any leisure or sports activities which may involve contact to the face for 3 to 6 months which is the time it takes the bones to fully heal.

What are the possible problems?

There are potential complications with any operation. Fortunately with this type of surgery complications are rare. However it is important that you are aware of them and have the opportunity to discuss them with your surgeon.

- **Bleeding** – some oozing from the cuts inside your mouth on the night of the operation is normal and to be expected. Significant bleeding is very unusual but if it happens

it can usually be stopped by applying pressure with a rolled up handkerchief or swab over the area for at least 10 minutes.

- **Numbness** – your bottom lip will be numb and tingly after the operation, similar to the sensation after having an injection at the dentist. This numbness may take several months to disappear and in a minority of patients may be permanent. Occasionally this can be a uncomfortable/burning sensation known as disaesthesia.
- **Infection** – the small plates and screws that hold your jaw in its new position are usually left in place permanently. Occasionally they can become infected and need to be removed but if this happens it is not normally a problem until several months after surgery.
- **Adjustment of the bite** – in the weeks following surgery, it is often necessary to put elastic bands on your orthodontic braces to guide your bite into its new position. Rarely, if your new bite is not quite right, a second small operation may be needed to reposition the fixing plates and screws.

Will I need further appointments?

A follow up appointment will be given to you before you leave hospital. You should expect to see your surgeon in the Oral Surgery Department around 7 days after your operation. All other follow up appointments will be arranged from there. Patients are usually seen 1 week, 2 weeks and 4 weeks after the operation, before returning to their routine orthodontic appointments.

Your braces are normally removed approximately six months after your operation. Retainers will be provided after your treatment has been completed to be worn on a night time basis.

If you need advice or have a medical problem after surgery, please call the Oral Surgery Department 8am – 4.30pm Monday to Friday. Outside these times (evenings and weekends) please contact the on call member of staff via the hospital switchboard.

Contact numbers

Oral Surgery Department 01722 336262 ext 3255

Dietitian 01722 336262 ext 4333.

For further information, the British Orthodontic Society website has some good information on jaw surgery. Please visit the following website:

www.bos.org.uk/Public-Patients/Your-Jaw-Surgery1