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You are entitled to a copy of any letter we write about you. Please ask if you want one when you come to the hospital.

If you are unhappy with the advice you have been given by your GP, consultant, or another healthcare professional, you may ask for a second (or further) opinion.

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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Fractures of the cheekbone (Zygoma) (page 1 of 3)

This leaflet has been designed to improve your understanding of your planned treatment and contains answers to common questions. If you have any other questions that the leaflet does not answer or would like further explanation please ask a member of the medical or nursing staff.

The problem

Your cheekbone has been broken. The cheekbone forms part of the eye socket, both protecting the eyeball and supporting it from below. It is also linked to the side of the nose and the upper jaw. The number of fractures, where they are and whether they need treatment to help them heal has already been established by the doctor who examined you. The treatment that is about to take place involves a general anaesthetic, that is you will be asleep during the operation.

What does the operation involve?

Once asleep the cheekbone will be put back in the right place. This usually involves a small cut about an inch long through the hair in the temple. This may be all that is needed but if the surgeon feels that your cheekbone will move it may be necessary to hold it in place with small metal plates and screws or a pin. Doing this may need one or more alternative cuts:

- a cut made close to the outside end of the eyebrow
- a cut made on the inside of the mouth through the gum above the back teeth
- a cut made in the skin crease just below the lower eyelashes or on the inside of the lower eyelid.

You will have stitches in each wound. Stitches in the mouth will dissolve after a few weeks and fall out. Any other stitches will need to be removed over a week.

Will anything else be done while I am asleep?

If the bones in the floor of the eye socket are shattered they may not support the eyeball properly even if they are put back in the right position. It may be necessary to add a 'graft' to your eye socket to support the eyeball. Your doctor will talk to you about this before you sign your consent form. Grafts can be plastic or bone from another area of your body.

Oral Surgery Department

 **01722 336262 ext 3255**

What can I expect after the operation?

It is likely to be sore and regular painkillers will be given to you. The discomfort is usually worse for the first few days although it may take a couple of weeks to completely disappear. Cheekbone fractures usually heal without infection but you may need antibiotics, particularly if a 'graft' has been used. You may have antibiotics through a vein in your arm while you are in hospital. You will be sent home with painkillers and antibiotics if necessary.

There will be swelling and bruising in the skin around your eyelids. Sometimes the whites of your eyes may become bruised giving them a red appearance. All these changes are most noticeable in the first 24 hours after surgery and will be much better after 2 weeks. Swelling and bruising can be improved by using cold compresses and sleeping propped upright for the first few days after surgery.

You will usually stay in hospital for one night after the operation. The next day the position of your cheekbone may be checked with X-rays before you are allowed home.

Even if the fracture has been held in the right place with plates and screws it still takes around 6 weeks for your cheekbone to heal completely. During this time you need to be careful to avoid any injury to this side of your face since it may well push the cheekbone back out of position again. You should also avoid blowing your nose on the side of the fracture for a month after surgery as this can produce swelling in and around the eye.

Before leaving hospital an appointment will be arranged to take out any stitches and review you in the outpatient department. It is important to keep any stitches or dressings dry until they are removed. If you have any incisions inside your mouth it may be difficult to clean your teeth around stitches because it is sore. It is best to keep the area free from food debris by gently rinsing your mouth with a mouthwash or warm salt water (dissolve a level teaspoon of kitchen salt in a cup of warm water) starting on the day after surgery.

Do I need to take any time off work?

Depending on the nature of your work it may be necessary to take a fortnight or so off work and avoid strenuous exercise for this time. Remember, you will not be able to drive or operate machinery for 48 hours after your general anaesthetic.

What are the possible problems?

- there is a nerve that runs through the cheekbone that supplies feeling to the cheek, the side of your nose and upper lip. If this nerve was bruised at the time of the fracture you may feel some tingling or numbness over your face. This tingling can also be caused or made worse by surgery. For most people the numbness gets better on its own although it may take several months to do so.
- any cuts made on the face will leave a scar but these should fade with time and after a few months will usually be difficult to see.
- bleeding from the incisions is unlikely but if the area bleeds when you get home this can usually be stopped by applying pressure with a rolled up handkerchief or swab over the site for at least 10 minutes.

- bleeding in and around the eye socket can very rarely cause a problem with the eyesight immediately following surgery. You will be closely monitored in the first few hours after your operation to make sure that if this happens it will be picked up quickly. If you experience worsening vision or pain in and around your eye when you get home you should return to hospital immediately.
- if a cut is made in the skin of the lower eyelid, the outside corner of the lid may be pulled down slightly (an ectropion). This usually settles on its own but may need further surgery.
- if we have had to put any plates or screws in your cheekbone to hold it in place these do not need to be removed because they don't cause problems unless they become infected. We use titanium metal which does not set off metal detectors in airports.

Will I need further appointments?

An appointment will be arranged before you leave hospital. We will keep a close eye on you for several months after treatment to make sure that your fracture is healing well.

Further advice

The British Dental Health Foundation

Offers free expert advice on oral health problems from Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm

 0845 0631188

www.dentalhealth.org.uk