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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 lower jaw (page 1 of 2)

This leaflet has been designed to improve your understanding of your planned treatment and contains answers to many common questions. If you have any other questions or would like further explanation please ask a member of the medical or nursing staff.

The problem

Your lower jaw has been broken. 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 fracture sites will be opened up. This involves making a cut on the inside of your mouth through the gum. The broken bones are then put back together and held in place with small metal plates and screws. The gum is stitched back into place with dissolvable stitches that can take a fortnight or even longer to fall out.

During the same operation it is often necessary to place wires or metal braces around your teeth so that elastic bands can be attached to them and guide your bite into the correct position after surgery. Screws inserted into the jawbone above the teeth are occasionally used instead of wires or metal braces. Elastic bands are not usually attached until the day after your operation, that is your jaws will be able to move freely when you wake up from surgery.

Will anything else be done while I am asleep?

Occasionally it is necessary to remove damaged or decayed teeth at the site of the fracture. In very difficult fractures it is sometimes necessary to make a cut on the outside of the mouth through the skin. If this is going to take place, the site and size of the cut will be discussed with you before you sign any consent form for your operation.

What can I expect after the operation?

Your jaw is likely to be sore and regular painkillers will be arranged for you. The discomfort is usually worse for the first few days, although it may take a couple of weeks to completely disappear. It is important that the fractures heal without any infection so you will be given antibiotics through a vein in your arm whilst you are in hospital. You may be sent home with painkillers and antibiotics.

Oral Surgery Department

 **01722 336262 ext 3255**

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.

Although the plates and screws hold the fractures in place it still takes around 6 weeks for your lower jaw to heal completely. During this time you need to eat a relatively soft diet, this will be discussed with you by the doctors, nurses and dietitians. It is important that you keep your mouth as clean as possible for the first few weeks after surgery to prevent infection. It may be difficult to clean your teeth around stitches because your mouth 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.

If any wires, metal braces or screws are used to help guide your bite into the correct position they will be removed in the outpatient department when your doctors are happy that your fracture has healed.

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?

- infection is uncommon because of the antibiotics that are used.
- bleeding from the cuts inside your mouth is unlikely to be a problem. If the area bleeds when you get home this can usually be stopped by applying pressure over the site with a rolled up handkerchief or swab for at least 10 minutes.
- there is a nerve that runs through the centre of the lower jaw that supplies feeling to your lower lip, chin and bottom teeth. If this nerve was bruised at the time of the fracture you may feel some tingling or numbness in your lip and/or chin. 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.
- occasionally teeth adjacent to the fracture site may be damaged by the screws that are used.
- if we have had to put any plates or screws in your jaw 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 jaw is healing well.

However, should you experience any problems or have any concerns then please contact the ORAL SURGERY DEPARTMENT 8am-5pm Mon to Fri 01722 336262 ext 3255.