

North West London, Hertfordshire
and Berkshire Orthognathic network

Orthognathic (jaw) surgery



BEFORE



AFTER



Introduction

This leaflet contains information about orthognathic surgery. This is a specialist field that corrects facial, jaw and dental imbalances with surgery and orthodontics. Your hospital team will go through your treatment with you, but this is for you to take home.

What is orthognathic surgery?

Orthognathic surgery repositions the jaws and face, including the nose, if the upper part of the face is operated on. This surgery helps to correct facial imbalances and bite problems.

Orthognathic surgery aims to balance the face so that all the features are in proportion to one another, producing a pleasing facial appearance and teeth that meet properly. Most patients are delighted with the results and, although there may be some difficult times during the treatment, once it is over the benefits are significant.

Why do I need surgery?

We only perform surgery if you need it and if you want it to be done. It is not always possible to correct your teeth and the way they bite together using orthodontics alone. This is because the bones of your face and jaws may be out of balance with one another. For example, you may have a larger lower jaw and a normal-sized upper jaw. Orthognathic surgery can correct this problem and improve the shape of your face.

Why do I need orthodontic treatment as well?

We use braces to move the teeth to make sure they will meet together correctly after the operation. Usually, fixed train-track type braces are



BEFORE



AFTER



fitted about 18 months before surgery. They are worn for at least six months afterwards until the teeth are finely adjusted and stabilised. After that, there will be a period when you will wear a removable retainer brace to hold the teeth in position.

How long will the treatment take?

In total, treatment may take an average of about 2½ years and surgery happens about 18 months from the start of orthodontics. The orthodontic treatment may take longer if you miss any appointments and/or break your brace/s.

Is the operation painful?

The main problem after surgery is numbness and swelling rather than pain, and the combination of numb lips and swelling makes the swelling seem worse than it actually is. Everybody is different, but most people find the swelling is at its worst 36 to 48 hours after surgery and it gradually goes down over the next two weeks. You will feel close to fully recovered after six weeks from the surgery.

It may take several months before the shape of your face finally adjusts (only close friends and relatives will be aware of the subtle changes).

You may find it uncomfortable breathing through your nose for a few weeks and may have a sore throat after surgery. You are likely to feel uncomfortable and sorry for yourself for a few days, but do not worry unduly, as it will get better.

In our experience, older patients seem to find these symptoms more difficult than younger patients and take longer to get over the operation.

Who will treat me?

In hospital, your treatment will be led by a team of consultant maxillofacial surgeons and orthodontists.

Our consultant orthodontists qualify as orthodontists and then they go on to have specialist training in a hospital to enable them to deal with the most complex problems.

Our consultant maxillofacial surgeons are qualified in medicine and dentistry. They are Board Certified through the Royal College of Surgeons and GMC registered in Maxillofacial and Oral Surgery.



Where will I be treated?

The North West London Regional Maxillofacial Service is the only surgical unit in northwest London that carries out these operations. It is also a large post-graduate teaching centre for doctors who are registrars, clinical fellows and senior house officers.

Our patients are seen in clinics in the following units:

- Hillingdon Hospital
- Northwick Park Hospital
- Watford Hospital
- Wexham Park Hospital

Wherever you live, you will have your operation at Northwick Park Hospital, which is the hub of the North West London Regional Maxillofacial Service. After that, you will go back to your original unit for the rest of your care.

How long will I be in hospital?

This depends on the individual, but most patients stay in hospital for one or two nights after surgery. People vary in their speed of recovery, but you should consider taking between two and four weeks off from work, education or other commitments.

What does the operation involve?

The operation is all done from inside the mouth, so there are no external scars, other than two small cuts on either side of the angle of your jaw (about 5mm long). These are usually virtually invisible a few weeks after surgery.

The jaw bones are repositioned and secured by tiny plates and screws, which remain under the gums. After surgery small elastic bands are used between the teeth.

What can I expect immediately after surgery?

- **Eating:** mouth opening is initially limited due to the operation. You will be encouraged to eat and drink from the first day and gradually progress from blended food and nutritional drink supplements to a normal diet over the next few weeks.
- **Speech:** you will be able to talk albeit with difficulty initially. This will gradually recover within one - two weeks.

What are the risks or complications?

Numbness: the lips, chin and gums will be numb immediately after the operation. It may take six to nine months to get normal feeling back. In 30% of cases there may be some permanent loss or alteration of sensation but the lips look and move normally and this rarely bothers patients. On rare occasions the side of the tongue may remain numb.

Infection: tiny fixing plates and screws are usually left in place permanently. In 3% of cases the plates may have to be removed if they become infected. If this is the case, the plates can be removed as a short day case procedure.

Readjustment: occasionally when patients wake up from the anaesthetic the strong jaw muscles alter the position of the jaws. Although they may be only a few millimetres out of place, a second operation may be necessary to adjust the position of the jaws.

Relapse: there is a tendency for the muscles, skin, tongue and lips to bring the face and teeth toward the original position to some extent in many cases (this is called a relapse). It is possible but rare to go back to where one was at the start of treatment.

Slight change to the shape of the nose: an operation on the top jaw might alter the shape of the nose.



Will I look different after the surgery?

You will almost certainly look different to some degree. Quite how different depends on the extent of your original problem and how much the jaw/s have had to be moved.

Is there an alternative?

Yes, don't have the operation. Nobody wants you to have it unless you feel you will benefit from it after your consultation with us.

Contact us

In an emergency our specialist Maxillofacial team is available 24 hours a day on 020 8864 3232 at Northwick Park Hospital. If it is urgent and you can't speak on the phone come directly to the hospital's Accident and Emergency Department.

Northwick Park Hospital Maxillofacial and Orthodontic unit

1. Maxillofacial reception desk (9am-5pm): Telephone 020 8235 4214
2. Orthodontics reception desk (9am-5pm): Telephone 020 8869 5820
3. Nursing desk (9am-5pm): Telephone 020 8235 4179/4137
4. Maxillofacial Technicians desk (10am-5pm):
Telephone 020 8235 4236
5. Secretary for Mr Heliotis, Mr Shorafa, Consultant Surgeons,
(9am-5pm): Telephone 020 8235 4284
6. Secretary for Mr Crow, Ms Hewage, Mr Ismail and Ms Izadi,
Consultant Orthodontists, (9am-5pm): Telephone 020 8235 4216
7. Gray Ward (Maxillofacial ward), accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week: Telephone 020 8869 2502

Contact details for the other hospitals that are part of the network:

Hillingdon Hospital Maxillofacial and Orthodontic unit

1. Reception and nursing desk (9am-5pm): Telephone 01895 279 224
2. Secretary for Mr Crow, Consultant Orthodontist:
Telephone 01895 279 256

Watford General Hospital Maxillofacial and Orthodontic unit

1. Secretary to Mr Heliotis (9am-5pm): Telephone 01923 217 205
2. Secretary for Mr Moseley, Ms Nightingale and Ms Sidhom,
Consultant Orthodontists, (9am-5pm):
Telephone 01923 217 205/681

Wexham Park Hospital Maxillofacial and Orthodontic unit

1. Reception desk (9am-5pm): Telephone 01753 634 095
2. Secretary for Mr Shorafa, Consultant Surgeon, and Mr Power,
Consultant Orthodontist, (9am-5pm): Telephone 01753 634 076
3. Nursing desk (9am-5pm): Telephone 01753 634 074
4. Maxillofacial Technician's desk: Telephone 01753 634



General Trust Information

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS is a confidential service for people who would like information, help or advice about the services provided by any of our hospitals. Please call 0800 783 4372 between 10am and 4pm or e-mail Nwlh-tr.PALS@nhs.net. Please note that this service does not provide clinical advice so please contact the relevant department directly to discuss any concerns or queries about your upcoming test, examination or surgery.

For a translation of this leaflet or for an English version in large print, audio or Braille please ask a member of staff or call 0800 783 4372.

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What are my responsibilities before my jaw surgery?

If you smoke

You must stop smoking six weeks before your surgery and not start again for at least three months after. Smoking increases the risk of infection in your jaws, pneumonia and other complications. Of course, the NHS would recommend that you stop completely. If you need help to give up, please contact your local stop smoking service or your GP.

You must clean your teeth thoroughly

Otherwise your operation will be cancelled. If your mouth is not clean, the risk of infection increases. If you need advice on how to clean your teeth properly, consult your dentist.

Tell the surgeon and anaesthetist about any medical problems or medicines you take, no matter how trivial or unrelated you think they may be.

Do not take any herbal or homeopathic medication.

If you are on the contraceptive pill

You must use additional methods of precaution over your next cycle, as the medication you are given during the operation interferes with the pill and you may get pregnant.

If you think you may be pregnant

Speak to the doctors about it, as the anaesthetic and surgery could possibly affect an unborn baby.



Read this leaflet

Before you got to this stage, you will have been given information about your treatment, what to expect and possible complications. Please read this leaflet to make sure you understand and feel free to ask any questions if you do not understand anything.

BEFORE



AFTER



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