

# Jaw (Orthognathic) Surgery: Your Surgical Experience

You have been scheduled for orthognathic surgery. This is treatment that reshapes the jaws to improve their form and function. Surgery takes place in a hospital or surgery center. The procedure lasts several hours. You will likely stay in the hospital for 1 to 2 days. In some cases, it may be possible to leave the same day. In either case, hospital staff will keep you comfortable and help you recover until you're ready to go home.

## The day of surgery



- When you arrive at the hospital, you'll change into a hospital gown. Staff will then prepare you for surgery.
- An IV (intravenous) line will be put in a vein in your arm or hand to give you fluids and medicines.
- You'll meet with an anesthesiologist or nurse anesthetist. This is to discuss the medicine (general anesthesia) that will be used to keep you asleep and free of pain during surgery.
- Once you're under anesthesia, the surgery will take place.
- To help stabilize the bite, a plastic splint may be placed between the chewing surfaces of your teeth. In some cases, elastic bands or wires are attached to braces to hold the jaws firmly shut. In other cases, looser elastic bands called "guiding elastics" are used. Sometimes, no wires or bands are needed.

## Right after surgery

- After surgery you'll awake in a recovery room.
- Your IV will stay in place.
- You'll most likely have a device to give you oxygen.

- Ice packs will be applied to your face to control swelling.
- Your face will most likely be numb, but you'll be given medicine if you feel any pain.
- Nurses will keep watch over you to make sure you're recovering well from anesthesia.
- You'll then be taken to a regular hospital room.

## Recovering in the hospital

- You'll be urged to get up and walk as soon as possible after surgery. This helps you recover from anesthesia. It also helps prevent complications.
- Sometime late in the day, you'll likely be given liquids to drink.
- Using facial muscles helps reduce swelling, so try to talk if you can.
- It's common to have some nausea the first day. Vomiting when you can't open your jaws can be scary, but don't panic. Since you fasted before surgery and you're now taking only liquids, the vomit will be liquid. Just lean over and spit it out. If you have any concerns about how nausea may affect you, talk to your surgeon ahead of time.

## Going home

- You will most likely stay in the hospital overnight, or for up to 2 days. You can go home when you're able to get up and walk around, you have no signs of complications, and your nausea is under control.
- Before you leave, you'll be told how to reduce pain, swelling, and nausea at home.
- You'll also be given prescriptions for medicines to help control these problems. Take them as directed.
- Follow directions from your healthcare team about how and when to do oral care.
- Follow directions from your healthcare team about eating. You may need to eat a liquid diet for a few days. This may include juice, broth, milk, nutritional supplements, or blended foods. After a few days on a liquid diet, you may need to eat a soft, no-chew diet for several weeks. This may include things like scrambled eggs or pancakes. Ask your surgeon when you can return to your usual diet.

## Possible complications after jaw surgery

Risks and possible complications of surgery include:

- Short-term (temporary) pain and swelling
- Bleeding
- Numbness (in most cases temporary)
- Infection
- Loss of teeth or bone

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- Relapse (bones move back toward original positions)
  - Risks of anesthesia