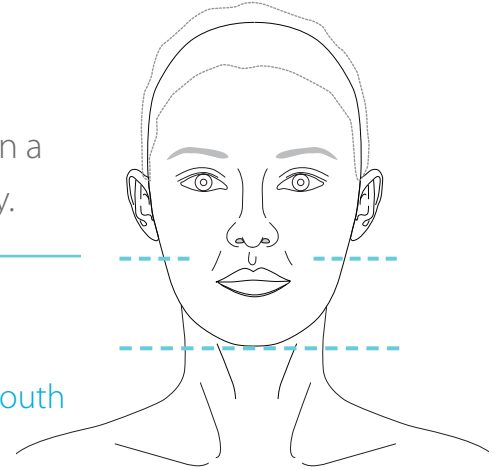


# Fracture of the Mandible (lower jaw)

## Oral & Maxillofacial Surgical Services

Advice to improve your understanding of the management of injuries to the lower jaw.

Most fractures of the lower jaw are caused by fights, sporting injuries, falls or road traffic accidents. These injuries are treated in a variety of ways depending on the location and severity of injury.



### Symptoms

- Pain, swelling and bruising of the lower jaw, face, jaw joint and mouth
- Painful to eat and chew
- Limited mouth opening
- An abnormal bite, which is called a dental malocclusion
- Numbness or altered sensation of the gums, lower lip and chin
- Loose and broken teeth or fillings
- Torn gums.

### Tests and treatment

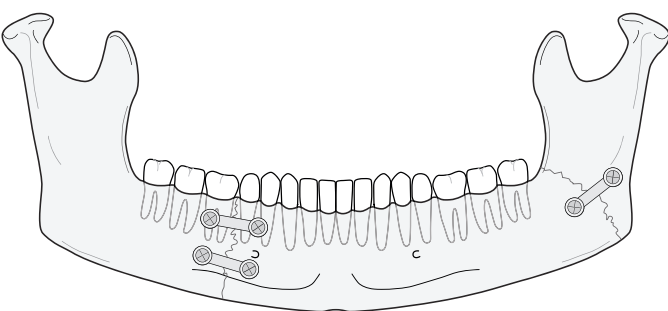
#### Tests

- X-rays
- Occasionally CT scans

#### Treatment

Treatment will depend on the severity and location of the fracture(s) in the jaw.

The aim is to correct the dental malocclusion (bite) but this may not always be possible.



#### Treatment options include:

##### Operation

Bone plates are used to stabilise the jaw in the correct position to allow healing of the fractures

##### Elastic traction and splinting

Elastic traction between the upper and lower jaws may be used to correct the dental malocclusion

##### Wiring the jaws

This old fashioned technique is now rarely required except for complicated fractures

**Occasionally the fracture may heal** simply by resting the jaw and maintaining a soft diet

#### Specific fractures:

Fractures involving the jaw joint can be complex and need treatment with elastic guidance between the teeth or an operation with a skin incision behind the jaw.

## The operation

### What does the operation involve?

- A general anaesthetic (you are asleep)
- The fracture is aligned and the teeth are placed in the correct bite
- Incisions (cuts) within the mouth to expose the fractures
- Small titanium bone plates and screws are used to stabilise the fractures
- The wounds in the mouth are closed with dissolving stitches
- Sometimes elastic bands attached to bars on the teeth are used to guide the teeth into the correct bite for the first few weeks.

### Will there be scars?

- Usually all cuts (incisions) are placed within the mouth
- Occasionally small stab incisions are placed in the cheek to insert screws. These usually heal well and are not visible after a few months
- In a few cases an incision is made in the neck or behind the jaw to improve access to the fracture.

### What can I expect after the operation?

- One night in hospital and occasionally longer
- Swelling, bruising and discomfort
- X-rays to check the position of the jaw
- Painkillers and antibiotics will be prescribed
- Numbness or altered sensation to the lower lip and chin which usually improves over several months. Sometimes it may not go away completely.
- Stiffness and clicking of the jaw joint with reduced mouth opening.

## Follow-up

Attend appointments at ?????????? to check on your recovery and identify any problems.

## Care instructions

- Remain on a soft diet for six weeks until the jaw is fully healed
- Keep your mouth very clean. Brush your teeth gently but effectively. Use mouth rinses
- Avoid any further injury until the jaw has fully healed
- Avoid contact sports for three months
- Attend your follow-up appointments so healing can be checked
- Your dentist may need to repair damaged teeth or grind teeth to adjust the bite.

## Possible Problems

### Occasionally:

- Bleeding wounds in the mouth or outside.
- Damage to teeth next to the fracture
- Infection of the wounds and plates
- The bone plates may need to be removed because of infection, exposure or loosening of the screws
- Numbness or altered sensation of the lower lip, chin, tongue and gums
- The bite may not be exactly the same as before the injury, especially with a complicated fracture
- Rarely, a second operation may be required.

### Serious complications:

- Permanent numbness or altered sensation to the area of the lower lip, chin, mouth and tongue as a result of the injury or the treatment
- If a cut is made in the neck or the skin near the jaw there may be weakness of the muscles that move the lower lip or face. This is usually temporary and rarely permanent.

## Please contact us:

If you have any problems between appointments

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