

2015

# Facial Fractures

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Facial bone fractures need to be taken care of properly to prevent future problems. Problems could include developing facial deformities, dental malocclusions (“bad bite”), jaw infection, or changes in facial growth. **The pain that comes with breaking a bone is usually helped right away once the fracture is repaired.**

This pamphlet is about what to expect if you are having surgery to fix facial bone fractures.

This pamphlet is just a guide. If you have questions, please talk to your healthcare provider.  
We are here to help you.

## Admission to hospital

- You will likely be admitted to a hospital room from the Emergency Department or the Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Clinic.
- The surgeon can only estimate when your surgery will take place as there are often several patients waiting who need emergency operations.
- An intravenous (IV) will be started. The nurses and doctors will give you medications through the IV to keep you comfortable.
- Do not eat or drink anything after you have been admitted to the hospital unless your surgeon tells you that it is OK. **Your surgery will be cancelled if you eat or drink before your operation.** Nausea

and vomiting are more likely to happen during or shortly after your operation.

- **Stop smoking as soon as you are admitted to hospital.** Smoking can make your recovery more difficult and can delay healing. Smoking is not allowed anywhere on the hospital grounds. This includes electronic cigarettes.
- Please send any valuables you have home with a family member. The hospital is not responsible for them.
- The nurse will ask you several health questions and take your vital signs.
- Tell the nurse if you have any food or drug allergies.
- You may need to have some blood tests.
- The oral surgeon will speak with you if he or she hasn't yet.
- You will be asked to change into a hospital gown. Please do not wear any undergarments.
- Please give the nurse the name and phone number of the person you want contacted when your surgery is finished.
- **Note to those waiting:** Patients with facial fractures are usually in the Operating Room and recovery area for 2-10 hours. The length of time depends on the type of surgery needed to fix the fracture. At the end of the operation, the surgeon will contact a friend or family member when asked to do so by the patient.

## After surgery

- You will be taken to the recovery area. You will stay there for 2-6 hours depending on the length of your surgery.
- The nurses will take your vital signs several times during your stay there. This is normal.
- You will get medications to make you comfortable and prevent any nausea. These medications will be given through your IV until you are drinking well.
- A nurse will help you to the bathroom until you are steady on your feet.
- Facial swelling can go up over 3 days and will gradually go down over 3 weeks. Ice packs will be placed on your face to lessen the amount of swelling.
- You may have bruising.
- A small amount of blood will ooze from your nose and surgical incisions (cuts) for the first 2 days. This is normal.
- Your jaws may be fixed together with either elastics or wires. This lets the bones heal properly.
- You may find it hard to swallow and talk if your jaws are fixed together. This will get better after a couple of days.
- You may vomit because of nausea. **Don't panic.** There are many spaces between your teeth even when they are wired together. These spaces will let the vomit go through. The nurse will help you.

- You will be taken to your hospital room when you are fully awake and comfortable.
- Once you are in your room, you can have visitors. We will try to accommodate your needs and your family's needs for contact. We also must respect the rights and needs of other patients. **Please check with the nurses about visiting guidelines for your unit.** Visitors may be asked to leave when the doctors or nurses come to see you.
- You will be encouraged to drink fluids. The IV will be taken out only when all the IV medications have been given and you are drinking enough fluids.
- Once you feel steady on your feet, you will be encouraged to get up and walk. You may need help walking on the first day.
- You will be told what you can and cannot eat during the healing period. The dietitian will meet with you. If possible, have the person who will be cooking your meals at this meeting. You will not be able to chew solid food for 4 weeks if you have a fracture to the jaw joint (condyle) or upper jaw (maxilla), or lower jaw (mandible). Chewing solid food before this time can cause infection of the bone or disturb fracture healing. **This will require more surgery.**
- It is very important to rinse your mouth as you're told. The surgeon and residents will talk about mouth care with you. Keep your mouth clean to prevent infection. **Do not brush your teeth until told it's OK.** Brushing your teeth too soon after the surgery can damage the stitches.

- The resident surgeons will see you every morning. Please tell them if you have any concerns or problems.
- The surgeon can only estimate how many days you will be in hospital. You will be discharged home only when you are eating and drinking well and are comfortable.
- Facial bone fractures take many months to completely heal. During this time, avoid any activities that may injure the surgery site.

## **Discharge checklist**

- Have the surgeons told you that you are ready for discharge?
- Have you arranged for a drive home?
- Have you had X-rays taken after your surgery?
- Have you been told what you can and cannot eat for the next 4 weeks?
- Do you have a follow-up appointment for the Oral Surgery Clinic?
- Do you have instructions from the oral surgeons about your care at home?
- If your jaws are wired together, have you received a pair of wire cutters and instructions for their use?
- Do you have your prescriptions?
- Have the surgeons suggested when you can return to work or school and your usual activities?

## **Questions or concerns once you are at home**

For urgent questions or concerns such as (but not limited to):

- Bleeding from the wound or nose.
- Having a hard time swallowing or breathing.
- Significant nausea and/or vomiting.
- Increasing pain or pain not getting better.
- Significant increase in swelling.
- Shift in bite (how your teeth fit together).
- Fever.
- The loss of several elastics or wires, letting your jaw move more than it should while healing.

Call 902-473-5238 between 8:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., Monday to Friday. Messages will be returned as soon as possible.

If it's busy or outside of the above hours, call 902-473-2222 and ask for the oral surgery resident on call. Stay on the line and the resident will be with you shortly.

## **Non urgent questions**

Call the Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Clinic, Victoria General site between 8:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., Monday to Friday.

The phone number is 902-473-2070. Messages will be returned as soon as possible.

