



Patient & Family Guide
2015

Temporomandibular Joint (TMJ) Surgery (Jaw Joint Surgery)



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Temporomandibular Joint (TMJ) Surgery (Jaw Joint Surgery)

Temporomandibular joint (TMJ) surgery is performed to correct conditions affecting the jaw joints. These include diseases that cause pain and a limitation in jaw movement. Occasionally, a rib bone is used to repair a damaged jaw joint.

Please note that arthroscopy, a form of TMJ surgery, does not require an overnight stay in hospital. Most other TMJ surgery does require an overnight stay in hospital.

This pamphlet explains what you can expect if you are having TMJ surgery.

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

The day before surgery

- Stop smoking at least 24 hours before your operation. Smoking can make your recovery more difficult and can delay healing. Smoking is not allowed anywhere on the grounds of the hospital.
- Do not eat or drink anything after midnight the night before surgery. Your surgery will be cancelled if you eat or drink after this time. Nausea and vomiting may occur during or shortly after your operation.

The day of surgery

- You will be asked to arrive at the hospital at least 1½ hours before your operation. You will go to the Same Day Surgery Unit on the **10th floor of the Victoria Building, Victoria General Hospital site.**
- **Note to patients not staying overnight in hospital:** You will need to have someone take you home after your operation. Your surgery will be cancelled if you do not have a drive home. Under no circumstance will you be allowed to drive yourself home, as you are legally impaired for 24 hours.

- Do not bring valuables to the hospital. The hospital is not responsible for them.
- Please brush your teeth well before coming to the hospital. Do not swallow any water.
- The nurse will ask you several health questions and take your vital signs.
- Be sure to tell the nurse if you have any food or drug allergies.
- You may need some blood tests.
- The oral surgeon may speak with you unless he or she has already done so.
- 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 individual you want contacted after your surgery.
- **Note to those waiting:** Patients who are having TMJ surgery are usually in the Operating Room and recovery area for 2-8 hours. The length of time depends on the type of surgery needed. At the end of the procedure, the surgeon will contact a friend or family member when asked to do so by the patient.

After your surgery

- You will be taken to the recovery area. You will remain there for 1-4 hours depending on the length of your surgery.
- The nurses will take your vital signs several times during recovery. This is normal.
- You will be given medications to make you comfortable, prevent nausea, and help reduce facial swelling. These will be given by intravenous (IV) until you are drinking well.
- Until you are steady on your feet, a nurse will help you to the bathroom.
- Facial swelling will increase over 3 days and will gradually reduce over 3-4 weeks. Ice packs may be used to minimize the amount of swelling.
- A small amount of blood will ooze from your nose and surgical incisions for the first 2 days. This is normal.
- You may have stitches in front of your ear or under your jaw. These stitches are often covered by tape for several days.
- You may have a pressure bandage over the stitches in front of your ear.
- You will have stitches on your chest if a rib bone was used to repair your jaw joint.

- Your jaws may be fixed together with either elastics or wires. This allows for the proper healing of the bones.
- You may find it hard to swallow and talk if your jaws are fixed together. This will improve after a couple of days.
- Vomiting can occur. **Do not panic.** Many spaces exist between your teeth even when they are wired together. These spaces will allow the vomit to pass through.
- Once you are fully awake and comfortable, you will be taken to your hospital room.
- You will be able to have visitors once you are in a hospital room. 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.

- A dietitian will talk with you about what you can and cannot eat during the healing period. If possible, have the person who will be cooking your meals at this meeting.
- It is very important to rinse your mouth as you are told. The surgeon and residents will talk about mouth care with you. Keeping your mouth clean after surgery is necessary to prevent infection. Do not brush your teeth until told to do so. Brushing your teeth too soon after the surgery can damage the stitches in your mouth.
- 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.
- If a rib bone was used for your jaw joint surgery you will be asked to AVOID taking a bath for a period of time.
- The surgeon will tell you what activities you will need to avoid to allow for proper healing of the jaw joints after surgery.

Discharge checklist

- Have the surgeons told you that you are ready for discharge home?
- Have you arranged for a drive home?
- Have you had X-rays taken after surgery?
- Has the dietitian spoken with you?
- Have you received a follow-up appointment for the Oral Surgery Clinic?
- Have you received instructions from the oral surgeons about your care at home?
- Have you been told when to have your stitches removed?
- If your jaws are wired together, have you received a pair of wire cutters and instructions on their use?
- Do you have your prescriptions?

Questions or concerns once you are home

Urgent questions

If you experience any of the following:

- Bleeding from the wound
- Discharge from the wound
- Difficulty swallowing or breathing
- Significant nausea and/or vomiting
- Increasing pain or pain not improving
- Significant increase in swelling
- Shift in bite (your teeth move, so it feels different when you bite into something)
- Fever
- The loss of several elastics or wires causing a loosening of the jaw immobilization (if present).

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.

If you have any questions, please ask.
We are here to help you.

Notes:

Looking for more health information?

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.
For more information go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

*Nova Scotia Health Authority promotes a smoke-free, vape-free, and scent-free environment.
Please do not use perfumed products. Thank you!*

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The information in this brochure is for informational and educational purposes only.
The information is not intended to be and does not constitute healthcare or medical advice.
If you have any questions, please ask your healthcare provider.

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.