



Maxillofacial Surgery
South Sacramento Medical Center

Postoperative Instructions for Orthognathic Surgery

➤ **AFTER YOU LEAVE:**

➤ **About your medications:**

- Take all your medications as directed. If you feel it is not helping, call your doctor. Do not quit taking it unless instructed or you have a reaction.
- Keep track of what medications you are taking and when you are taking them.
- If you are taking antibiotics, take them until they are all gone, even if you feel better.
- If you are taking medications, which make you drowsy, do not drive or use heavy machinery.

➤ **Follow-up appointment:**

- If you have not been given a follow-up appointment, please call the appointment desk at (916) 525-6350

➤ **Do – Post operative instructions:**

- Ice the surgical area for the first 48 to 72 hours after surgery. Place the ice on the surgical area for 15 to 20 minutes every hour, as you need it. Place the ice in plastic bag and cover it with a towel. Do not sleep with the ice pack in place. Ice helps with the swelling and bruising.
- After the first three days you can place moist heat on the surgical area.
- Remember your face is numb do not place excessively hot or cold items directly on your skin!
- Brush your teeth gently with a soft toothbrush and toothpaste three times a day. Good dental hygiene is necessary to decrease the chance for infection.
- After you brush, use the chlorhexidine mouth wash three times a day if you are given a prescription. You may use regular mouth rinse without alcohol.
- If you want to use warm salt water rinses it is okay. You can use the warm salt water rinses as many times a day as you would like.
- You can use a mist humidifier to help you breathe easier.
- Sleep with your head elevated on three to four pillows.
- Shower as usual.
- Be careful shaving your face since areas are numb.



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➤ **Do not:**

- Do not blow your nose.
- Do not lift anything heavy (must be less than the 20lbs) or do strong exercises until your doctor says it is okay.
- Do not participate in contact sports such as football or basketball for at least three months postoperatively.
- Do not use a waterpic for the first two weeks or when indicated by your surgeon.

➤ **Postoperative diet:**

- You are on a non-chew diet for the next six weeks.
- **DO NOT CHEW!**
- Eat several times a day. Postoperative healing depends on good nutrition.
- **DO NOT ATTEMPT A WEIGHT LOSS PLAN.** Vitamins are encouraged.

➤ **Rubber bands:**

- Rubber bands may be placed on your braces for support of your jaw bones and to guide you into your new bite.
- **You should wear them 24-hours a day.**
- Remove the rubber bands to eat or brush your teeth.
- Change them every day as they will tend to lose their elasticity.

➤ **Call Maxillofacial surgery clinic at (916) 525-6350 between 8am to 5pm Monday thru Friday and 24 hour / 7 days a week advice line (916) 688-2106 if:**

- Bleeding is bright cherry red and is not controllable
- You have concerns about your surgical procedure or healing process.
- You have difficulty breathing.
- You have a reaction to your medications.
- You have a sudden increase in your temperature.
- You have a sudden increase in facial swelling.



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Hospitalization:

The operating room will call you 24-48 hours before the surgery and tell you what time you need to arrive the day of surgery. It is very important that you arrive on time. In most cases, patients having mandibular (lower jaw) surgery will be discharged from the hospital the same day of the surgery. Patients having maxillary surgery (upper jaw) or both upper and lower jaw surgeries will likely remain in the hospital until the next day. Families should plan to be here at least by 9am to pick the patient up.

Day of surgery:

You will be seen by the anesthesiologist and/or nurse anesthetist who will be administering your general anesthetic during the operation and your surgeons will see you before surgery. Prior to surgery a preop nurse will place an IV, put sequential compression devices on your lower legs to help prevent blood clots, and have you spray your nose with a decongestant. The nurse may also collect a small amount of blood for tests and if you are a female of child-bearing age you will be asked to provide a urine specimen for a pregnancy test. Prior to being transported to the operating room, the anesthesia staff will administer a sedative in your IV. When it is time, you'll be brought back to the operating room by the nurse.

You will receive a general anesthetic and be completely asleep during your operation. When you awaken you will be in the recovery room. Most patients will be in the recovery room approximately 2-4 hours before they are discharged home or sent to their hospital room.

Nausea:

If you have a history of severe nausea after surgery, please let your surgeon and the anesthesia team know. Not uncommonly, you may experience some nausea during the postoperative period. Many patients are concerned about nausea and vomiting, but this should not frighten you since you will have an empty stomach. If you feel nauseated, ask for medication to relieve those symptoms. If you are wired shut and vomiting occurs, it is important to remain calm, lean forward, and allow the fluids to flow around and through your teeth. You will have suction at bedside to help clear the remaining liquid. Also, call the nurse so they can assist you.

Although wire cutters are available to trained personnel on the floor, it is unusual to have to cut wires that are holding your jaws in position. The nurses who care for you are experienced in dealing with patients who have their jaws wired together.

Numbness:

After the surgery, you will experience altered sensations or numbness in areas of your lips, cheeks, tongue, gums, or teeth. While the nerve fibers are healing, you may experience strange sensations or tingling in these areas. Normal sensations usually return in six months or less. On rare occasions, the altered sensation may be permanent and we will discuss this with you before and after your operation.

Minor bleeding following surgery:

It is very common to have some mild bleeding during the first few hours after your surgery. You will be shown how to use the small suction apparatus at your bedside to remove any small amount of blood plus



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excessive saliva which may accumulate in your mouth. The type of bleeding and drooling that might require suctioning stops within the first 24 hrs. It is not unusual to experience some minor bleeding from your nose or mouth during the next 7 to 10 days, especially when you bend over.

Walking and Deep Breathing:

You will be encouraged to get out of bed and walk around as soon as possible after surgery. You will also be asked to take frequent deep breathes (like sighs) to help your lungs recover from the anesthetic. The earlier you are up and about, the more normal you will feel and the less likely to develop other complications. Make sure there is someone there to assist you when getting out of bed.

Swelling/Bruising:

You can anticipate swelling will occur and the degree of swelling is quite variable in different individuals. More swelling usually occurs with lower jaw surgery than with upper jaw surgery.

Swelling will continue to increase for approximately two to three days following surgery and will dramatically resolve within two weeks. Application of ice packs to jaws for the first three days will help minimize swelling. If you have new swelling after the first week, then please call your Doctor as this is often an indication of a postoperative infection.

Bruising is also quite variable in different individuals. It often worsens a few days after surgery and then gradually fades over the first two weeks. Gravity will often cause the bruising to go into the neck and even the chest.

Nasal stuffiness and sore throat:

Nasal stuffiness, following maxillary surgery (upper jaw), is common and to be expected. When this occurs, it can be managed with a combination of nasal sprays and cleansing of the nostrils. It is suggested you remove nasal crusting and scabbing using a cotton swab soaked in a solution of peroxide and water (one to three parts).

When it is necessary to use Afrin nasal spray, it should be sprayed with sufficient force for you to taste the medication. When used correctly, this will provide relief in approximately three to five minutes. You may only use the Afrin nasal spray for three days and then you must stop. The saline spray can be used as much as needed and will help keep your nose moist. The nasal stuffiness will resolve within approximately one-week following surgery.

You are not to blow your nose for at least eight weeks following upper jaw surgery, or until your physician gives their okay to do so. If nasal stuffiness continues after you arrive home, a humidifier may be used in addition to the above procedures. This is not required, but may be helpful in special instances.

You will likely have a sore throat immediately after the surgery. This is caused by the nasal tube used for your anesthesia and the manipulation required placing it in the proper position. Humidified oxygen may be given after surgery by face mask to help keep the nasal passages moist and help soothe the sore throat.



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Splints:

In many cases, a splint is used. A plastic splint is constructed from your dental models that have been placed into the new bite relationship. After the jaws have been divided, the teeth are wired together into the splint to establish and maintain the correct position. The splint may be wired to your upper teeth to establish and maintain the correct jaw relationship. It may be necessary to wire your jaws together (into the splint) to assure proper alignment and healing. The splint will remain in place a maximum of six weeks. Although it is annoying and collects food debris easily, it plays a vital role in helping your muscles adjust to the new jaw position.

Oral Hygiene:

In order for good wound healing to occur, you must brush your teeth after each meal. A soft child's toothbrush should be purchased at your local store before your surgery for this purpose. The choice of toothpaste is up to you. It is important that you brush all the way in the back since the incisions for lower jaw surgery are in this area and must be kept free of food. The mouth is naturally full of bacteria and keeping your teeth and braces shiny is the best thing you can do to aid the healing process. You need not worry about damaging the incisions with the toothbrush.

You are cautioned not to use water irrigating device such as a water pic until approximately two weeks following surgery or as instructed by your surgeon. These irrigating devices have sufficient force that if used immediately following surgery, it could result in the breakdown of the incisions in your mouth.

Postoperative pain:

Most patients are pleasantly surprised at the usually low level of postoperative pain after the surgery. This is because the great majority of patients have numbness immediately after the surgery. While in the hospital, you'll receive IV medications for pain and you will be sent home with appropriate pain medications.

Medications:

Motrin or Ibuprofen

If you are not allergic to Motrin, you will likely be given a prescription for this drug. You will be given a concentration of between 600mg and 800mg. Please take this drug as directed for the first five days. This drug will help reduce the swelling and will help with the pain as well.

Norco, Hycet, Tylenol #3, Percocet

Unless you are allergic to one of these drugs, you will be given a prescription for one of them. You will be given a tablet unless you are wired shut in which case you will be given the liquid form. These drugs are very strong narcotic pain medications. Do not mix them with alcohol or other narcotics or other drugs without specific permission from your doctor. **DO NOT OPERATE MACHINERY OR TAKE CARE OF OTHERS WHILE TAKING THIS MEDICATION.** These drugs can make you drowsy or nauseated. **TAKE THESE DRUGS AS PRESCRIBED, DO NOT TAKE ANYMORE THAN THAT. TAKE THESE DRUGS AS YOU NEED THEM ONLY!!**



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Antibiotics:

If you are given an antibiotic, TAKE IT ALL UNTIL IT IS GONE AS PRESCRIBED BY YOUR DOCTOR. If you are a female on birth control pills, be aware that antibiotics can decrease the effectiveness of birth control pills. Please use alternative methods of birth control.

Activity at home:

You should expect to be fatigued the first week after surgery. You have just undergone a major medical procedure. Do not over exert yourself, but it is important that you do activities such as walking. You should strive to return to your normal routine of everyday activity when possible. Lifting heavy objects (nothing more than 20 pounds) is forbidden for 8-10 weeks. Lifting heavy objects can disrupt and delay bone healing.

Do not:

1. Swim for 8 weeks after surgery.
2. Upper jaw surgery patients cannot blow their nose for 8 weeks. If you have a sudden onset of facial swelling, please notify your surgeon.
3. Protect your face from injury. Wear lap and shoulder restraints while driving and maintain a safe distance from airbags. Do not participate in contact sports for 3-4 months.

Items to have at home:

Patients have told us several items that have been helpful during the recovery period. We would like to share these with you: 1. A child's toothbrush, several may be necessary as they wear quickly. 2. A sippy cup or commuter cup for drinking if your jaws are wired together. 3. Alcohol free mouthwash. Mouthwashes containing alcohol can burn tissues without you feeling it. 4. Something to keep your lips moist such as Vaseline. 5. A blender. 6. A strainer (wire mesh or coffee filter system).

Nutrition:

During the weeks immediately after your surgery, while your bones and soft tissues are healing, your diet is very important. The diet should be a soft, *non-chewing*, high protein diet. This is not the time to go on a diet to lose those couple of extra pounds. Your body needs calories and protein to optimize bone healing after surgery.

We recommend that you have a blender to puree almost any food you like. If your jaws are wired together, you will be limited to a strictly liquid/puree diet which you may take by using a syringe with a rubber tube (provided to you if necessary) or you may choose to use a straw to drink from a cup.

Modification of a simple and pleasurable routine, such as eating, can almost overwhelm the person who is not prepared. It is essential that you try to maintain your weight – once again this is not the time to diet. Men normally require approximately 2600 calories daily and women require approximately 2000. For proper healing, you need more calories, proteins and vitamins than normally. To help meet these requirements, you must eat more frequently up to six-eight times a day. The diet guide will assist you to a healthy and successful recovery. We recommend reviewing the list of recipes you are given and



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finding the foods that appeal to you most. Soups, smoothies, and shakes are especially important if you are wired shut. Even patients who are not wired shut will likely favor a more liquid/puree diet the first week or two after surgery.

We also recommend that you supplement your diet with multivitamins. Instant breakfast drinks and protein powders are a good source of protein and calorie supplementation.

A weight loss of 10% may be anticipated following surgery. This is more a reflection in loss of appetite rather than the teeth being wired together. Once your diet returns to normal, you will regain your weight within a few weeks. It is also extremely important to take in plenty of fluids (over a gallon is ideal), because dehydration can result in nausea and vomiting and more importantly, can affect the bone healing. Use the color of your urine as a guide, if it starts getting dark, you are behind and need to increase your fluids significantly!!

Remember, biting into foods could cause displacement of the healing jaw segments.

Diet when wired shut:

All foods must be blended and strained to remove food particles prior to drinking. Try nutritional supplements such as Ensure, Boost, Carnation instant breakfast drinks (all are available in supermarkets and drugstores). Health-food stores carry ready-made milk shakes such as Rice dream, VitaSoy, Thunder, or Amzake. They also have protein powders such as Weight Gainer 1850 that are easy to add to milkshakes or juice. Other suggestions for on the go meals include canned juice such as V-8 splash or fusion, fast food restaurant milkshakes, baby food and food in a jar, as well as yogurt.

If you are taking vitamins before, continue to do so. Whole vitamins can be smashed in the cloth, with a hammer and dissolved in juice.

Clean your mouth properly after each meal.

If you have lactose intolerance use lactose free milk or milk substitute such as soy or almond.

If diarrhea develops try decreasing milk and milk products. Call your surgeon if diarrhea persists.

After your jaw has been unwired:

It is very important that you follow our instructions after your jaws have been unwired. At this time, the jaws are not completely healed and may require re-operating if these instructions are not followed carefully.

DIET:

- At first, it will be difficult to open your mouth.
- Soft, non-chew diet for a total of six weeks after the surgery.
- You can gradually increase the consistency of your diet to include items such as chicken, tender red meat, salads and fresh fruits as long as you do not have to chew them.
- Cut up your foods into small pieces.