

Your Health while you are waiting for Oral & Maxillofacial surgery treatment

Introduction

Oral & maxillofacial Surgery deals with the diagnosis and management of pathology of the mouth and jaws that requires surgical intervention. Oral Surgery involves the treatment of children, adolescents and adults, and the management of dentally anxious and medically complex patients.

You will have an initial outpatient assessment either face to face, by telephone or video and a treatment plan will be made in partnership with you for what care you may need. You will be put on a waiting list, this may involve treatment which could be under local anaesthetic, sedation or a general anaesthetic.

COVID-19 has resulted in long wait times for some patients and care has been triaged according.

Sometimes circumstances change and your priority may need to be modified. Get in touch via the hospitals booking team, your dentist or doctor if your circumstances or condition has changed

The advice below is aimed at helping you look after yourself while you are waiting for your treatment.

Guidance for Patients

Maintaining good oral health is vital, continue with your current oral health regime, brushing your teeth twice daily, using aids such as flossing, mouthwashes and minimising your sugar intake. Continue with any planned dental care with your dentist/hygienist as well as any check-ups that are scheduled.

If you have a dental emergency or pain your regular dentist will still be able to see you. If they cannot or you don't have a dentist, an emergency dentist (via 111) will do everything they can to help you the same or next day. You may be also be able to see an emergency dentist at either another practice or at a direct dental access centre.

Many mild **toothaches** are caused by food caught between teeth. Before calling an **emergency dentist**, gently floss to remove any trapped food particles that could be causing pain and rinse with warm water.

If the toothache persists, call your dentist or 111 as soon as possible and take over-the-counter pain relievers until your appointment. **DO NOT** put crushed aspirin on your tooth as this burns to the gums.

If you experience pain at night, keeping your head elevated slightly can help ease the pain while you fall asleep and can make it less painful while you are awake. In addition avoiding very hot or cold foods and drinks as well as staying to soft food may help temporarily.

A local pharmacist may also be able to help.

What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

A dental emergency can cover a broad range of complaints, including:

Severe dental pain – if you are in severe dental pain an emergency dental appointment could provide the necessary care to relieve your dental pain.

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Uncontrolled Bleeding from the mouth – this can often be managed by biting on a damp piece of gauze or clean handkerchief for 10 minutes. Uncontrolled bleeding from the mouth is considered a dental emergency and you should see your dentist as soon as possible or contact 111 for advice and treatment. In addition most hospitals will be able to give advice via an oncall system they have in place for Oral & maxillofacial care if it is severe.

Infection – an abscess in the mouth is considered a dental emergency and you should speak to your dentist or 111 immediately. Serious infection can very occasionally be life-threatening. If you are experiencing significant swelling in or around your mouth or have difficulty swallowing/talking you should call 999 immediately.

Dental surgeries are still open

Dental surgeries are still open but may be working differently to how they did before the COVID-19 pandemic. Dental practice staff are also helping patients to manage their conditions at home while they wait for hospital appointments. You should contact a dentist if you are unsure about any of the above symptoms you are experiencing.

Your General health

Looking after your physical and mental wellbeing while you are waiting for treatment is important to ensuring your long term health does not suffer.

- Continue to take your normal medication that you are prescribed
- Keep moving, physical activity is essential as part of a healthy lifestyle. If you need support, your GP or healthcare professional can refer you to an exercise programme. As part of the programme you may take part in a range of activities either at a leisure centre, in the local community, or in an outdoor setting. This could include activities such as gym sessions, swimming, walking groups, or specialist exercise groups and classes. For more information, please speak to your GP.
- While you are waiting consider any lifestyle changes that may help you improve your health such as smoking cessation, losing weight or by reducing sugary dietary intake. **Health Improvement Coaches** have been commissioned to provide free mental well-being, stop smoking, and weight management support

Urgent Health Advice

For urgent health advice about physical or mental health, when it's not an emergency, please call 111 from any landline or mobile phone. You can also visit www.nhs.uk. The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Life Threatening Emergencies

For something life threatening – severe bleeding, breathing difficulties or chest pains – please dial 999.

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Summary

Your care is a priority for us. COVID-19 has made wait times longer than we would wish and this is nationally recognised.

Whilst we work on improving access to the care we provide and work to reduce waiting times we are prioritising the needs of patients waiting. Those who are at risk of a deterioration in their health if not treated, in severe pain or have specific time critical procedure are being prioritised.

It is recognised that conditions change and the priority of an individual may change with time. If you feel this is the case for you either contact the booking team at your local unit, your GMP or dentist.