

Vail Valley Ear, Nose & Throat Group, P.C.
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POST-OP INSTRUCTIONS

MANDIBLE (JAW) FRACTURE

A jaw fracture is usually repaired by wiring the jaw shut. A heavy metal bar (called an arch bar) is attached to the teeth of the upper and lower jaws and these bars are then wired together using either metal wires or small rubber bands. This essentially uses the upper jaw as a splint to hold the lower jaw in place while it heals. This also holds the teeth in alignment during healing, which is very important. Having your jaw wired shut can be dangerous if you vomit or have any swelling in the mouth or throat. Thus, it is very important to avoid any activity which may cause vomiting or swelling in the mouth. After surgery you will be given some wire cutters. Carry these with you AT ALL TIMES after surgery. If you have the need to vomit or are experiencing difficulty breathing, you must cut either the rubber bands or the vertical wires running between the upper and lower teeth. Do not cut the wires going around the teeth as these hold the arch bars in place. If you do have to cut the wires or rubber bands, call my office to come in as soon as possible to replace them.

WOUND CARE: After surgery you will have a considerable amount of swelling of the lips, gums and tongue. Keep your head elevated for the first 24 hours after surgery to minimize this swelling. Apply lip balm to your lips several times a day to keep your lips moist. Several times a day you should use a water pic to clean the teeth and arch bars. By keeping the gums clean and healthy you will make removal of the arch bars much easier.

ACTIVITIES: I recommend avoiding any strenuous physical activity for at least 6 weeks after surgery. Thus, no heavy lifting, running, skiing, etc. This is to minimize any heavy breathing that will dry out the throat or cause any swelling. Also, you want to avoid any further trauma to the jaw that may interrupt the healing and mandate additional time with the arch bars.

DIET: After surgery you will only be able to take liquids. This includes anything that will essentially fit through a straw. Thus, blender foods such as smoothies, shakes, etc. are OK. It is important to keep your nutrition up, so make an effort to continue a well balanced diet. I recommend an instant breakfast type powdered meal supplement several times a day to ensure adequate vitamins, etc. **DO NOT DRINK ANY ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES.** Alcohol can cause vomiting which must be avoided at all costs.

MEDICATIONS: You will be given some pain medications and antibiotics after surgery, both in a liquid form. Follow the directions on the bottles.

FOLLOW UP: I should see you in my clinic approximately 1 week after surgery. Please call and make an appointment, if one has not already been made. Call me and come in sooner if you feel excessive movement in your teeth or the arch bars.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS: Complications to look out for include poor alignment of the teeth, loose teeth, the wires becoming loose, or excessive swelling or pain. Please call me immediately if any of these complications occur.