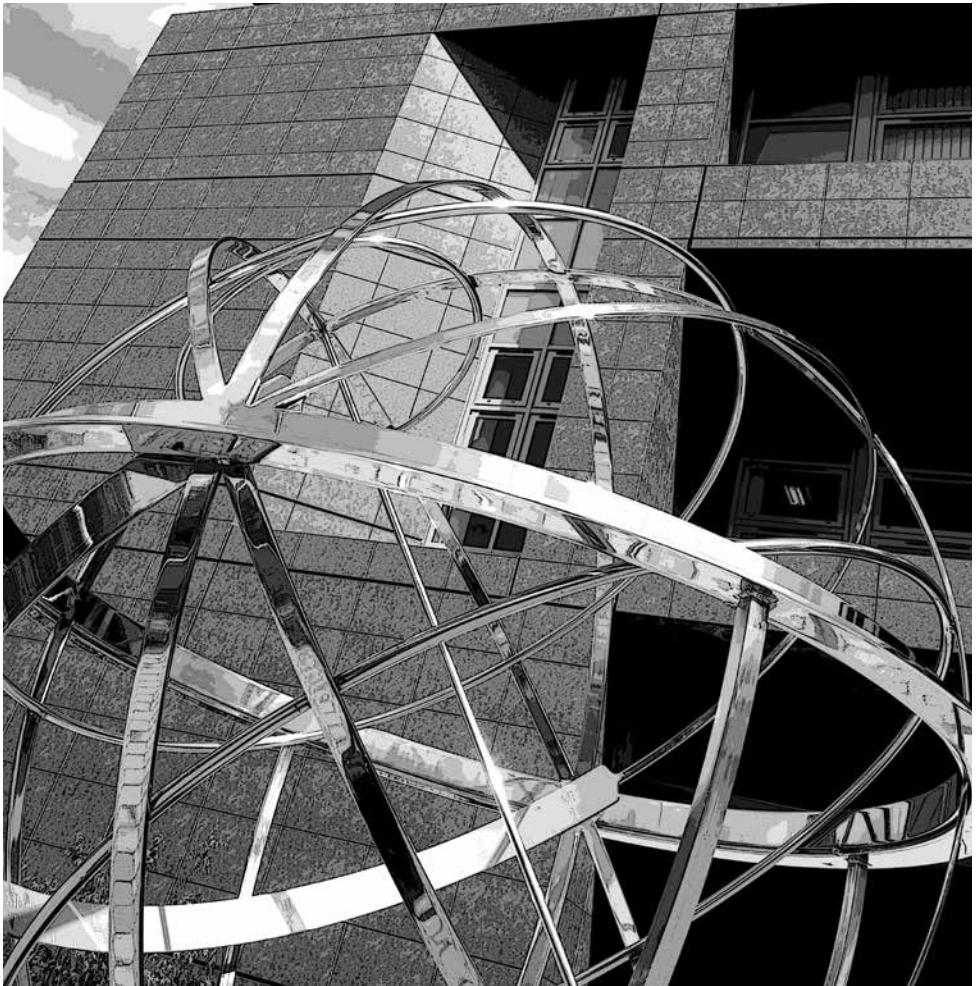


Oxford Centre for Head and Neck Oncology
**If your jaw is tight and stiff
(Trismus): common problems
and helpful hints**
Information for patients



If you have had an operation which involved your jaw, biting and chewing hard textures (e.g. apple, steak, salad, pizza, tough bread crusts, toast) should be avoided for 6 weeks after your operation. This is to allow your jaw to heal. During this time, choose puréed or softer textures which are gentler to chew.

If it is painful to move your jaw, make sure that you take enough pain relief medication half-an-hour before doing your jaw exercises. Do not continue to exercise if the pain increases, or persists after exercising.

Sugar free chewing gum may be helpful to keep your jaw moving. Chewing gum that contains xylitol will help to protect your teeth from dental decay. Check with your Speech and Language Therapist that it is safe for you to chew gum.

Jaw exercises

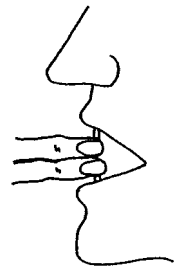
Keep help prevent your jaw from becoming stiff, exercise your jaw muscles as follows. Aim to do these exercises little and often. You will need to keep working at these exercises long term for maximum benefit.

Repeat the entire sequence 7 times a day.

1. Open your mouth as wide as possible. Hold at its maximum opening for 7 seconds, then release. Repeat 7 times.
2. Open your mouth wide, move your jaw to the left then release. Repeat 5 times.
3. Open your mouth wide, move your jaw to the right and then release. Repeat 5 times.

General advice

- If you find it hard to chew, try soft moist foods with plenty of sauces and gravy. Wash food down with drinks.
- If you need a fluid diet it is still important that you receive all the nourishment that your body needs. Follow your dietitian's advice and refer to our fluid diet sheet.
- A straw may be helpful for drinking.
- It is still important to keep your mouth clean. Use a small toothbrush if necessary. The Specialist Nurses can give you more advice about oral hygiene.
- A good way to check how wide you are able to open your mouth is by the 'Finger test'. Ask your Speech and Language Therapist to show you this. Aim to have a gap of at least two fingers width between your teeth – the exercises should help with this.



How to contact us/further information

If you have any questions or concerns, or need any further information, please contact your GP or call:

Head and Neck Cancer Specialist Nurses

Tel: **01865 234 346** (Monday to Friday, 8.00am to 4.00pm)

Speech and Language Therapists

Tel: **01865 231 205** (Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 5.00pm)

You will also be given the Specialist Nurses leaflet, which contains information on websites and support groups that you may find helpful.

If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221 473** or email **PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk**

Compiled by Head & Neck Oncology Team
January 2015
Review: January 2018
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