

Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery and Orthodontics

Surgery to expose buried canine teeth

Information for patients



The information in this leaflet will help you to understand your treatment. It contains answers to many of the questions commonly asked by patients about surgery to expose buried canine teeth.

Why do I need treatment to expose buried canine teeth?

You should have four permanent canine (eye) teeth. The upper canine teeth usually come through in the mouth between the ages of 11 and 13 years.

Sometimes either one or both of these teeth can develop in the wrong place or end up getting stuck or 'impacted' against the roots of the teeth either side of it. This may damage the nearby teeth.



Often the canine tooth can be impacted in the roof of the mouth (palate) behind the front teeth.

The canine tooth is an important tooth. If it is in a suitable position it can be brought into line by orthodontic treatment (braces). This would involve exposing (uncovering) the tooth as well as orthodontic treatment, which may take approximately 2½ years to complete.

What does the surgery involve?

This is a minor operation usually carried out under general anaesthetic – you will be asleep throughout the operation. Sometimes the operation is done under local anaesthetic (freezing the gum). The operation takes between 30 minutes and 1 hour. You will normally be able to go home the same day.

Once you are asleep or when the area is numb, the surgeon will remove a small piece of gum and bone to uncover the tooth.

Once your tooth is uncovered there are three options. Your surgeon will have discussed these with you:

1. Bracket and chain

An orthodontic bracket is glued to the tooth. Attached to this bracket is a small length of gold chain which can be secured to the gum with a stitch, or one of your teeth. Sometimes the gold chain may dangle down. Do not worry if this happens.



2. Cover plate (brace)

To prevent the gum growing back over the tooth, a simple removable brace may be made for you. Sometimes a gum dressing can be placed inside the brace. **We will show you how to remove and replace the brace before you leave hospital.** It will stay in place for 7 - 10 days.

3. Gauze pack

Sometimes a gauze pack (dressing) is stitched to the gum to help with healing. The wound is then closed with dissolving stitches. If you have a dressing, it needs to stay in place for 7 to 10 days. Care must be taken not to dislodge the pack;

if this does happen you should contact the department immediately.

Your surgeon or orthodontist will remove it at your next appointment.

What are the risks and side-effects of the surgery?

- Bleeding in the first 12 - 24 hours – this is common but it should only be minor.
- Pain – you should expect moderate pain for 2 - 3 days which can be controlled with 'over the counter' medication
- Infection (uncommon) – if this happens it will develop 2 - 5 five days after operation
- Anaesthetic risks – serious problems caused by general anaesthesia are very rare if you are a healthy patient. The anaesthetist will discuss with you any risks that relate to your particular circumstances.

What are the alternatives?

The doctor will discuss any appropriate alternatives with you. This may include:

- No orthodontics treatment (brace) – leaving the tooth where it is
- Removal of the tooth if orthodontic treatment is not possible.

How will I feel after the surgery?

Some areas of your mouth may be numb when you wake up.

Most people have some soreness which lasts for a few days. You may need to take some painkillers to help with this. Some

people have a small amount of bleeding and taste blood in their mouth for a day or two. The area will feel swollen and you may have to eat soft food for a couple of days. After the surgery you must take rest and avoid any physical activity.

The stitches holding the gums will usually dissolve after 2 - 4 weeks.

How do I look after my mouth?

1. Cover plate (brace)

If you are given a cover plate to wear you should take it out after 48 hours and clean it with a toothbrush. The cover plate should then be taken out twice a day and cleaned (as well as the teeth) until your next appointment. **You will need to remove the plate at least once a day for cleaning.**

A small headed soft toothbrush should be used to very gently clean the area twice a day. This prevents the gum tissue from growing back over the tooth. Mouth-rinsing should also be performed for at least a week, using either the mouthwash we give you (chlorhexidine) or warm salty water. This should **not** be done the day of surgery.

2. Bracket and chain or gauze pack

Teeth should be cleaned as usual twice daily with a small headed soft toothbrush. You should keep your mouth as clean as possible for a week using either the mouthwash we will give you (chlorhexidine) or warm salty water. This should **not** be done the day of surgery.

Follow-up

After 7 - 14 days our orthodontist will review you and an appointment will then be made for you some weeks later with your own orthodontist so that your orthodontic treatment may be started or continued.

Who can I contact if I have any questions or concerns?

There is always a doctor available in our department at the John Radcliffe Hospital who you can speak to or see in person if necessary.

Please telephone the John Radcliffe Hospital switchboard on: Oxford **(01865) 741166** and ask to speak to the doctor on-call for Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery.

If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221473**. When we receive your call we may transfer you to an interpreter. This can take some time, so please be patient.

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