

Severe dental infection surgery



Information for patients

This leaflet explains the surgery and other treatment you may have for a severe dental infection. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to the doctors or nurses caring for you.

Confirming your identity

Before you have a treatment or procedure, our staff will ask you your **name** and **date of birth** and check your **ID band**. If you don't have an ID band we will also ask you to confirm your address.

If we don't ask these questions, then please ask us to check.

Ensuring your safety is our primary concern.

Why do I need treatment?

You have an infection that is causing a swelling in your face, mouth, jaw or neck. You have been admitted to hospital because your doctor has decided that you need surgery. They have examined you and explained the cause of this infection.

What tests and treatments will I have?

You may need a number of different tests and treatments to get over this infection. These can include:

- blood tests
- x-rays or scans
- antibiotics through a vein (intravenously)
- steroids through a vein (intravenously)
- surgery under a general or a local anaesthetic to remove pus
- drains put into the wound after surgery to drain away any pus and fluid
- dental treatment such as fillings, root canal treatment or having teeth pulled out.

What are the benefits of surgery?

- It relieves pain.
- It prevents the spread of infection to your neck and chest.

What are the risks of surgery?

- Further infection. This is not common because we give you antibiotics.
- Bleeding from the cuts inside your mouth. This is not usually a problem, but if it happens you should be able to stop it by pressing against the wound with a rolled-up handkerchief or a swab for at least 10 minutes.



Consent

We must by law obtain your written consent to any operation and some other procedures beforehand. Staff will explain the risks, benefits and alternatives before they ask you to sign a consent form. If you are unsure of any aspect of the treatment proposed, please do not hesitate to speak with a senior member of the staff again.

What are the alternatives?

If there is pus coming out of the infected area, it needs to be drained. Antibiotics alone will not make you better.

What happens during surgery?

You will have either a local anaesthetic – where you are awake and we numb only the area we are going to operate on – or a general anaesthetic, where you are completely asleep.

The surgeon will make a cut on the inside of your mouth, through your gum, to open up the infected area and drain the pus. They will leave the cut open to allow any more pus and fluid to drain away.

They sometimes make a cut on the outside of your mouth (on your skin), depending on where the infection is. This wound will also be left open so any pus and fluid can drain away. They then cover the cut with a dressing.

The surgeon often has to take out damaged or decayed teeth that are causing the infection. They may put a drain (thin plastic tube) into your wounds to help drain the pus and fluid. We will take out the drain before you go. If the surgeon plans to put in a drain, we will explain this to you before you sign a consent form for surgery.



What happens after surgery?

The area we operated on is likely to be sore so we will give you painkillers to ease the pain. The discomfort is usually worse for the first few days and may take a couple of weeks to go away completely. To make sure your wounds heal without any more infection we will give you antibiotics through a vein in your arm while you are in hospital. We will also give you painkillers and a course of antibiotics to take at home.

You may find it difficult to open your mouth very wide. This is due to spasm in the muscles that allow you to open your mouth and chew. If the infection has caused you to have this problem, your doctor or nurse will give you some exercises to do to stretch the muscles and improve your mouth opening.

What can I eat and drink?

It will take a few days for the wounds inside your mouth to heal. During this time you need to eat a soft diet, such as: mashed potato, soup, smoothies, well-cooked pasta, scrambled egg, jelly and ice cream.

If you eat the right foods, you can prevent complications and you are more likely to heal quickly.

Can I brush my teeth?

It is also important that you keep your mouth as clean as possible for the first few weeks after treatment to prevent infection. You may find it difficult to clean your teeth around the wounds because they are sore. Try using a soft, small-headed toothbrush, such as a child's. Please note that mouthwash does not replace brushing your teeth.



The day after surgery, gently rinse your mouth with mouthwash or warm salt water (dissolve a flat teaspoon of table salt in a cup of warm water), to keep it free from food remains. Do this three times a day for five – seven days. We will give you mouthwash to start using in hospital and to take home with you.

It is important that you do not smoke because it makes you more likely to develop an infection. If you would like advice on how to stop smoking, please speak to a nurse.

How long will I need to take off work?

It depends on what type of job you do. You may need to take a few days off work and avoid hard exercise during this time.

Will I need to come back to hospital?

This depends on the type of infection you had. We may make a review appointment for you before you leave hospital.

Please see your dentist to find out if you need any dental treatment to prevent another infection.

What should I do if I do not have a dentist?

To find an NHS dentist near you and make an appointment, search the NHS website: **www.nhs.uk**. You do not need to register.

You can also call the **NHS 111** helpline for advice.



Who can I contact with queries and concerns?

Monday to Friday, 8am – 4pm: contact our Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) on **020 3299 5216**.

After 4pm and at weekends: phone switchboard on **020 3299 9000** and ask to speak to the member of staff on call for Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery.

In an emergency: please go to your local Emergency Department (A&E).

Sharing your information

We have teamed up with Guy's and St Thomas' Hospitals in a partnership known as King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at Guy's or St Thomas'. To make sure everyone you meet always has the most up-to-date information about your health, we may share information about you between the hospitals.

Care provided by students

We provide clinical training where our students get practical experience by treating patients. Please tell your doctor or nurse if you do not want students to be involved in your care. Your treatment will not be affected by your decision.



PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. The PALS office is located on the ground floor of the Hambleden Wing, near the main entrance on Bessemer Road - staff will be happy to direct you.

PALS at King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS

Tel: **020 3299 3601**

Email: **kch-tr.PALS@nhs.net**

You can also contact us by using our online form at

www.kch.nhs.uk/contact/pals

If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact PALS on 020 3299 1844.



Corporate Comms: 0807
PL642.2 January 2017
Review date January 2020