

MF09lite Open TMJ Surgery

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This document will give you information about open TMJ surgery. If you have any questions, you should ask your GP or other relevant health professional.

What is open TMJ surgery?

Open TMJ surgery allows your surgeon to see inside your temporomandibular joint (TMJ) through a cut on your skin. Your surgeon can diagnose and treat problems such as a torn cartilage and damage to the surface of the joint. They will be able to remove or change the position of the cartilage disc and reshape the lower and upper joint surfaces (see figure 1).

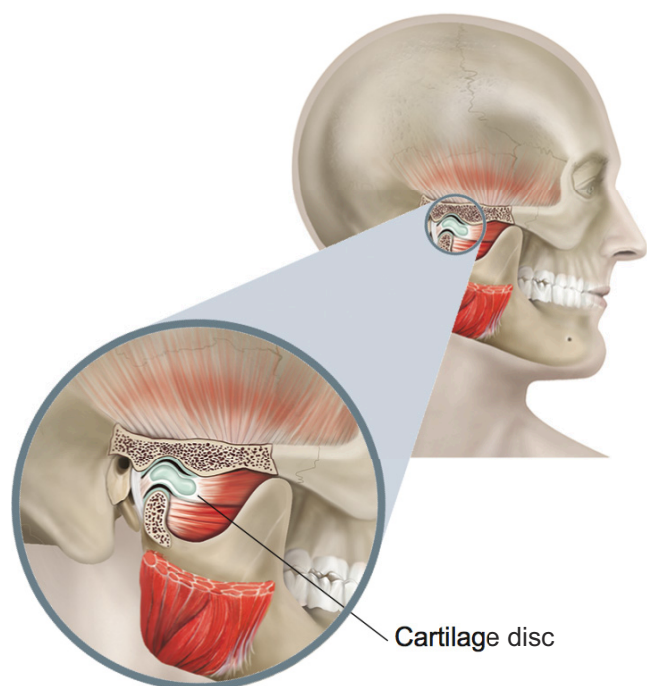


Figure 1
The temporomandibular joint

What are the benefits of surgery?

The aim is to confirm exactly what the problem is and to treat the problem at the same time.

Are there any alternatives to open TMJ surgery?

Problems inside a joint can often be diagnosed using tests such as CT scans and MRI scans. Non-surgical treatment such as rest, taking anti-inflammatory painkillers and wearing a TMJ splint can sometimes help. Muscle-relaxing medication or injections of Botox can reduce joint stiffness. A steroid injection into the joint can sometimes reduce pain for several months.

What does the operation involve?

The operation is performed under a general anaesthetic and usually takes about an hour for each joint.

Your surgeon will make a cut in front of your ear so they can open and examine the joint.

If the cartilage disc is out of place, your surgeon will use stitches or put a small metal pin in the bone to hold the disc in place.

If the disc itself is damaged, your surgeon will remove it. They may replace the disc using tissue from other areas of your body.

If a joint surface is damaged, your surgeon may reshape it, making it smoother. If your jaw keeps on coming out of joint, your surgeon may need to remove the upper joint surface.

What complications can happen?

1 General complications

- Pain
- Bleeding
- Bruising and swelling of your face
- Infection of the surgical site (wound)
- Blood clots

2 Specific complications

- Not being able to open your mouth fully (trismus) and jaw stiffness
- Tenderness and pain in the joint
- Numbness of the temple and ear
- Weak forehead movement

How soon will I recover?

The swelling and discomfort is usually at its worst after about two days.

You should be able to go home the same day or the day after.

If the stitches are not dissolvable, they are usually removed after 4 to 6 days.

You should be able to return to work after a few days, depending on your type of work.

Regular exercise should help you to return to normal activities as soon as possible. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Summary

Open TMJ surgery is an operation to diagnose and treat problems in your temporomandibular joint.

Acknowledgements

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This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.