

Patient Information

Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery

Arthrocentesis (wash out) of jaw joint

This leaflet is to help improve your understanding of arthrocentesis and contains answers to frequently asked questions. If you have any other questions that the leaflet does not answer or you would like further information, please ask a member of staff.

The problem

The disc of cartilage which lies in your jaw joint has moved out of its normal position between the bones. There may be **osteoarthritis** in the joint surfaces.

What is a jaw joint arthrocentesis?

Arthrocentesis is a procedure during which the jaw joint is washed out with sterile fluid. It aims to return the disc of cartilage to its normal position within the joint.

What does the treatment involve?

Arthrocentesis usually takes place under a general anaesthetic, so you will be unconscious. While you are asleep, two small needles will be inserted into the jaw joint. One of these needles allows sterile fluid to be pumped into the joint under pressure. The second needle allows fluid to be drained out of the joint.

Will anything else be done at the same time?

While you are asleep your lower jaw will often be manipulated in an attempt to encourage the disc of cartilage back into its normal position. Local anaesthetic or a **steroid** may be injected into the joint.



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How will I feel after the operation?

The area in and around the jaw joint is often uncomfortable for a day or two after the procedure. You may find it necessary to take simple painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen during this time. There may also be some swelling in front of your ear. You may find it difficult to fully open your jaw for a few weeks.

Will I be able to eat normally?

It is advisable to maintain a soft diet until instructed by your doctor at a follow up appointment. We can advise you on this.

Will I need another appointment?

You will need to return a few weeks after surgery to have your jaw joint checked by your surgeon. Arthrocentesis is not always successful and for some people it can take several months following the procedure for any improvement to take place.

If you have any problems after your operation please contact Clinic 11, Maxillofacial Department, on 024 7696 4000 and ask to speak to the Maxillofacial Senior House Officer on-call.

Adapted from British Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons.

Available from <http://www.baoms.org.uk/>

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 6500 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

To give feedback on this leaflet please email feedback@uhcw.nhs.uk

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