

## MF16 Enucleation of a Jaw Cyst

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## What is a jaw cyst?

A jaw cyst is a fluid-filled chamber (cavity) that can form in the jawbone. The wall of the cavity is lined by a thin layer of cells.

Jaw cysts are common and can happen for different reasons. They most often form around teeth or the leftover pieces of decayed teeth. Some jaw cysts do not cause any symptoms. Others may cause pain, swelling and problems with eating and speaking.

## What is enucleation of a jaw cyst?

Enucleation of a jaw cyst is a procedure to remove all of the cyst at once.

## Shared decision making and informed consent

Your healthcare team have suggested enucleation to remove a cyst. However, it is your decision to go ahead with the procedure or not. This document will give you information about the benefits and risks to help you make an informed decision.

Shared decision making happens when you decide on your treatment together with your healthcare team. Giving your 'informed consent' means choosing to go ahead with the procedure having understood the benefits, risks, alternatives and what will happen if you decide not to have it.

If you have any questions that this document does not answer, it is important to ask your healthcare team. Once they have answered all your questions and you feel ready to go ahead with the procedure, they will ask you to sign the informed consent form. This is the final step in the decision-making process. However, you can still change your mind at any point after signing the form.

## What are the benefits?

Removing the jaw cyst should relieve any symptoms and stop the cyst from coming back. Your surgeon may be able to treat the cause of the problem at the same time, for example, by removing an infected tooth or tooth root.

The tissue that your surgeon removes can be examined under a microscope to help them find out what caused the cyst and decide whether you need any further treatment.

## Are there any alternatives?

Treatment options depend on the size, type and location of the cyst, as well as your general health.

If the cyst is very small and not causing symptoms, you may not need any treatment. However, your dentist will need to monitor the cyst for any changes with check-ups and x-rays. If it gets bigger or your symptoms get worse, they may suggest surgery.

If the cyst is small and is caused by an infected tooth, your surgeon may suggest a root canal treatment. This involves removing any damaged parts of the tooth and cleaning out the centre to help remove the infection and shrink the cyst.

If the cyst is large, difficult to remove or there is a risk of damage to surrounding areas of your face, there are two alternative surgical options to enucleation:

- Marsupialisation. This involves opening the cyst and stitching the cyst lining to the inside of the mouth. This allows the cyst to drain and shrink over time.
- Decompression. This involves placing a plastic tube into the cavity to drain the fluid. The tube is left in place for several weeks. You will need regular appointments so the healthcare team can clean out the cavity through the tube.

If your surgeon thinks there is a high risk of the cyst coming back, they may suggest a combination of surgery and medication placed within the cyst. This medication stops the cells lining the cavity from growing back.

## What will happen if I decide not to have the procedure or the procedure is delayed?

Jaw cysts grow very slowly, so if surgery is delayed it is unlikely to affect the success of the procedure.

If you do not have treatment for a jaw cyst, you may start to develop symptoms or your symptoms will get worse. As the cyst grows, it can cause swelling, infection and pain. In severe cases it can damage the bone, nerves, teeth and blood vessels near to the cyst. This can cause your face to become disfigured or asymmetrical (when your face does not look the same on both sides).

## What does the procedure involve?

You will need to have x-rays and scans to help your surgeon plan the procedure. The healthcare team will ask you to confirm your name and the procedure you are having.

Enucleation of a cyst usually takes an hour. Different kinds of anaesthetic are possible and will depend on the size of the cyst. Your surgeon will discuss the options with you.

Your surgeon will make a cut in the gum over the cyst to uncover it. They will make a small window through the bone covering the cyst and use special instruments to remove all of the cyst at once. If needed, they will send the cyst to the laboratory for analysis.

Your surgeon will then clean the cavity and close the cut in the gum with dissolvable stitches.

If your surgeon needs to perform further treatment at the same time, such as a root canal or removing an infected tooth, they will discuss this with you before the procedure.

## What should I do about my medication?

Make sure your healthcare team know about all the medication you take and follow their advice. This includes all blood-thinning medication as well as herbal and complementary remedies, dietary supplements, and medication you buy over the counter.

## How can I prepare myself for the procedure?

If you smoke, stopping now may reduce your risk of developing complications and will improve your long-term health. Stopping smoking and keeping your mouth clean significantly reduces the risk of infection.

## What complications can happen?

The healthcare team are trained to reduce the risk of complications.

Possible complications of this procedure are shown below.

Any risk rates given are taken from studies of people who have had this procedure. Your doctor may be able to tell you if the risk of a complication is higher or lower for you. Some risks are higher if you are older, you are obese, you smoke or you have other health problems. Health problems include diabetes, heart disease or lung disease.

Some complications can be serious and may even cause death.

You should ask your doctor if there is anything you do not understand.

Your anaesthetist will be able to discuss with you the possible complications of having an anaesthetic.

## General complications of any procedure

- Bleeding after the procedure. This usually settles by biting down on a pack of gauze or a clean cotton handkerchief for 15 minutes.
- Allergic reaction to equipment, materials or medication. The healthcare team are trained to detect and treat any reactions that may happen. Tell them if you have any known allergies or if you have reacted to any medication or tests in the past.
- Swelling and bruising around the part of your face where the procedure was performed. This usually settles in 3 to 7 days.
- Infection. Your wound may take longer to heal and you may get pain. You may need antibiotics or further treatment.

## Specific complications of this procedure

- Break (fracture) of the jawbone. This is rare but can happen if the cyst is large and has already weakened the surrounding bone.
- Damage to nearby teeth. You may need treatment for this in the future.

- Damage to nerves that connect to your lip, teeth, tongue and chin. This can cause numbness, pain, burning or tingling in the area the nerve supplies. Your risk will depend on the size and location of the cyst. Any damage is usually temporary but in rare cases it may be permanent.
- Denture no longer fitting, if you wear one. You may need a new denture as surgery can change the shape of your jawbone.
- Recurrence of the cyst. This is when a cyst grows back in the same place or a different part of your jaw. Your risk will depend on the type of cyst you have had.

## Consequences of this procedure

- Pain in the area where your surgeon performed the enucleation. You may need medication to control the pain.

## What happens after the procedure?

After the procedure, your surgeon will make sure that any bleeding has stopped. You should be able to go home the same day.

If you are worried about anything in the hospital or at home, contact the healthcare team. They should be able to reassure you or identify and treat any complications.

## Returning to normal activities

If you had a sedative or a general anaesthetic:

- a responsible adult should take you home in a car or taxi and stay with you for at least 24 hours
- you should be near a phone in case of an emergency
- you must not drive, operate machinery or do any activities that could be dangerous (this includes cooking) for at least 24 hours and not until you have fully recovered feeling, movement and co-ordination, and
- you must not sign legal documents or drink alcohol for at least 24 hours.

It is normal to have a small amount of bleeding from your gum where the procedure was performed. This usually only lasts for 1 to 2 days. Any pain and swelling usually settles within a week.

Eat only soft foods for 1 to 2 days, gradually moving on to solid food only when you can chew comfortably. Avoid things that may irritate the area, such as foods that are chewy or have sharp edges. Try to chew using the other side of your mouth.

Starting the day after your procedure, brush your teeth gently until you can comfortably brush them normally again.

It can take 2 to 3 weeks for your wound to close, so gently rinse your mouth after meals to keep your wound clean. The dissolvable stitches should fall out after around 2 weeks but may take longer.

Simple painkillers such as paracetamol and anti-inflammatory painkillers such as ibuprofen should help relieve any pain.

Not smoking after your procedure will reduce your risk of complications like infection.

Let your healthcare team know if you have any of the following symptoms once you are at home as they could be a sign of a serious complication:

- Bleeding that does not settle
- Swelling of your face which gets worse instead of better
- Difficulty swallowing
- Change in the feeling of your lip, chin and tongue after any local anaesthetic has worn off, usually 2 to 3 hours after it was given
- Increased pain or other symptoms of infection such as a high temperature

## The future

The healthcare team will tell you when you need to come back to the clinic. If your surgeon sent the cyst to the laboratory for analysis, they will tell you the results. They will check your wound, and discuss with you any treatment or follow-up care you may need.

## Summary

Enucleation is a procedure to remove a jaw cyst.

Surgery is usually safe and effective but complications can happen. Being aware of them will help you make an informed decision about surgery. This will also help you and the healthcare team to notice and treat any problems after your procedure as quickly as possible.

Keep this information document. Use it to help you if you need to talk to the healthcare team.

Some information, such as risk and complication statistics, is taken from global studies and/or databases. Please ask your surgeon or doctor for more information about the risks that are specific to you, and they may be able to tell you about any other suitable treatments options.

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

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