

# Minor bone grafting (using bone from inside your mouth) and dental implants

The aim of this information sheet is to help answer some of the questions you may have about having a minor bone graft and dental implants. It explains the benefits, risks and alternatives of the procedure as well as what you can expect when you come to hospital. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

## What is a dental implant and bone graft?

Dental implants are artificial replacements for your tooth roots that are placed within the bone of your jaw to support dentures, crowns (caps) or bridges.

In some patients there is not enough bone in their jaw to allow dental implants to be inserted and a bone graft is needed to increase the amount of bone available.

## What happens during bone grafting?

When a small amount of bone is needed, we can transfer bone from one part of the jaw to the other. The bone graft is normally taken from the back of the jaw or from the chin area. This can be done under local anaesthesia (an injection which makes the area where we are working numb) and with or without sedation (to relax you).

- The gum is lifted away from the underlying bone where the graft is to be placed and the amount of bone needed is assessed.
- The bone is then taken from another part of your jaw after lifting the overlying gum and carefully drilling into the bone.
- The dentist will place the bone to be grafted onto the recipient site.
- The graft may be fixed in position with small pins or screws that can be removed when the implants are placed.
- The gum is replaced and stitched carefully back into place.
- The surgery usually takes about 60-90 minutes.
- The stitches are removed about a week later.

Once the graft has been confirmed as successful, and the site of the bone graft is totally healed, the next stage of the dental implant process can begin. See our information sheet on dental implants for more information on this stage of your treatment.

## **What are the benefits – why should I have a bone graft and dental implants?**

Dental implants can be very useful where we would otherwise have to crown (cap) healthy teeth or where a denture or bridge would be difficult or sometimes impossible because there are no suitable teeth or gums for support.

If there is not enough bone in your jaw, bone grafts may be required to insert enough implants to support dentures, crowns (caps) or bridges.

Bone grafts may also be needed to improve the bone and gum at a proposed implant site so that it looks better. Rebuilding a site to its dimensions before tooth loss can be difficult and a compromise end result may have to be accepted.

## **What are the risks?**

- Pain, swelling and bruising in the area where the graft (bone) has been taken from.
- Swelling in the jaw at the site of the graft which normally lasts for about one to two weeks.
- Infection and/or failure of the graft. We try to avoid this by using careful techniques and antibiotics.
- Insufficient successful graft bone to accept implants. In these cases further grafting may be necessary.
- The risk of failure is higher in certain individuals, particularly those who smoke, and you will be advised if we think risk of failure is higher than normal in your case.
- There is a higher risk of failure in implants placed into grafted bone rather than natural bone.

## **Are there any alternatives?**

Synthetic bone substitutes, or bone from animals or other humans, are available but do not perform as well as your natural bone. This is because it is less likely that your body will reject your own bone.

On some occasions your bone graft may also be mixed with a synthetic material or bone from another source i.e animal derived products. In some cases a synthetic membrane may also be used to cover and protect the graft. We will inform you of any proposed synthetic graft or membrane, the composition of the graft/membrane and the origin of the graft/membrane (make/type). The choice of material can be discussed.

## **How can I prepare?**

Please make sure you have told us about any problems with your health and about any tablets or medicines you are taking. Some medical conditions change the advice and information we need to give you.

If you are a smoker we strongly advise you to quit and remain a non-smoker in the long term. This will significantly reduce the risk of some implant complications. For help giving up smoking, please speak to your nurse, or call the Trust stop smoking service on **020 7188 0995**, or call the NHS Smoking Helpline on **0800 169 0 169**

## **Giving my consent (permission)**

We want to involve you in decisions about your care and treatment. If you decide to go ahead, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This states that you agree to have the treatment and you understand what it involves. If you would like more information about our consent process, please speak to a member of staff caring for you.

## **Will I feel any pain?**

The level of discomfort is variable and generally only requires painkillers, such as paracetamol or ibuprofen, which are available from your local pharmacy. It is better to take these before the local anaesthesia wears off, at the interval prescribed on the packet, for the first 24 hours.

It is possible that some facial swelling and bruising may occur. In order to minimise this apply ice packs to the area for ten minutes per hour, for the first six hours. A simple ice pack can be made by wrapping a small bag of frozen vegetables in a clean cloth.

## **What happens after the procedure?**

If you have had the procedure under local anaesthesia you will be able to leave hospital as soon as the procedure has been completed. You will be given a course of antibiotics to take home and use over the following week. In most cases, the graft will be left to heal for a period of three to six months before surgery is carried out to insert the dental implants.

## **What do I need to do after I go home?**

You should be able to return to work within a day or two of your treatment. Occasionally you may not be able to wear your dentures for up to two weeks after the surgery (the doctor or nurse treating you will let you know if this is the case).

You should avoid alcohol for 24 hours. **If you are a smoker we strongly advise you to quit and remain a non-smoker in the long term.**

It is not advisable to brush the area where your graft was taken from or inserted into for the first week after surgery. A mouthwash containing chlorhexidine (for example Corsodyl) is recommended to keep the area free of plaque. The mouthwash should be held in the mouth for one minute and this should be repeated twice daily. Please read and follow the instructions on the label.

## **What should I do if I have a problem at home?**

If any bleeding is experienced, roll up a clean handkerchief, press it over the wound and hold it there by closing your jaws firmly together for at least half an hour. If the bleeding does not stop you will need to attend your local accident and emergency (A&E) department.

## **Will I have a follow-up appointment?**

You will need a follow up appointment to check that the bone graft has worked and to plan the next stage of your implant treatment. This appointment will either be given to you before you leave hospital or sent to you in the post.

Any dental restorations or dentures based on implants will need regular follow up and occasional maintenance. We will expect you to be willing to attend for such care, and for regular checks of the implants themselves.

## Contact us

If you have any problems please contact the dental implant department on 020 7188 1816, 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday, or email the department: **dentalimplants@gstt.nhs.uk**

For emergencies outside normal working hours contact your local accident and emergency department.

### Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

**t:** 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

### Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

**t:** 020 7188 8801 (PALS)      **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

**t:** 020 7188 3514 (complaints)      **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

### Language and Accessible Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

**t:** 020 7188 8815      **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

### NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

**t:** 111

### NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

**w:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, and to become a member:

**t:** 0800 731 0319      **e:** members@gstt.nhs.uk      **w:** [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership)

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