

Jaw opening exercises and advice

This information and exercise sheet is for patients who have or are at risk of having reduced jaw opening.

Sometimes, jaw opening can become restricted after surgery. This can lead to problems with being able to open your mouth enough to eat, speak, clean your mouth or be examined.

Be aware of how much your mouth can open. A good test of this is to see how many fingers you can place between your front teeth or gums. 'Two fingers' is a good "functional" range i.e. helps with eating/ drinking/ tooth brushing. 'Three fingers' is the expected normal range. Practice this every day until your treatment is complete.

If this gap becomes less than three fingers wide, it may indicate that extra therapy may be helpful. Please speak to your health professional if you notice this happening.



Following an assessment of your jaw movement, your physiotherapist has advised one / a combination of the exercises below and over the page to aid recovery of your jaw opening.

Exercises	Progression
<p>Open/close</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sit in a chair with an upright posture. • Open the mouth as wide as you can. • Hold for 5-10 seconds. Repeat 10 times. Repeat 5-8 times a day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use your fingers to increase the stretch. • Hold the stretch for 20-30 seconds, 5 times; 5-8 times a day.
<p>Side-to-side movements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sit in a chair with an upright posture. • With the mouth slightly open, move the jaw from side to side (ensure that the movement is coming from the jaw and not the lips only). • Hold for 10 seconds in each direction. Repeat 10 times; 5-8 times a day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the stretch on the jaw by applying gentle sideways pressure on the chin.

<p>Figure of eight/camel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sit in a chair with an upright posture and the jaw in the resting position. • Move the jaw to replicate a sideways figure of eight/camel chewing motion. • Repeat 5 times in a clockwise direction. Repeat 5 times in an anti-clockwise direction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of repetitions to each side up to a maximum of 10.
<p>Fish stretch</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sit in a chair with an upright posture and the jaw in the resting position. • Push the tip of the tongue into the roof of the mouth. • Open the mouth as wide as you can, keeping the tongue in this position. • Hold for 5-10 seconds. Repeat 5-10 times, a total of 5-8 times a day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the hold to a maximum of 20 seconds.
<p>Forwards/backwards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sit in a chair with an upright posture and the mouth slightly open. • Poke the chin forwards so that the bottom jaw overlaps the top jaw. • Hold for 5-10 seconds and return to the resting position. Repeat 10 times. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the hold to a maximum of 20 seconds.

Follow-up

You may be referred for ongoing physiotherapy when you leave hospital. This is to prevent future problems with jaw opening and any other associated issues. The amount of physiotherapy you receive will depend on your individual needs. If at any point a problem reappears or you develop a new problem, please speak with your health professional.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your jaw opening or physiotherapy following your surgery, please contact:

- The Guy's outpatient physiotherapy department on 020 7188 5099 and ask for the **head and neck outpatient physiotherapist**
- The **head and neck inpatient physiotherapists** via 020 7188 5110/5106, or hospital switchboard on 0207188 7188 and ask for bleep 2136 or 0694.
- or, if you are known to the Community Head and Neck Team (CHANT), call the **CHANT physiotherapists** on 020 3049 2350.

Please leave a message if your call is not answered and someone will call you back. Opening hours are 8.30am to 4.45pm, Monday to Friday, (CHANT 9am-5pm).

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Notes

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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

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