Periodontal (gum) surgery

This leaflet explains more about having periodontal surgery, including the benefits, risks and alternatives. It also gives information about what you can expect when you come to hospital. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to a dentist or dental nurse caring for you.

What is periodontal surgery?
Periodontal surgery is treatment for any gum disease that remains after your dentist has carried out deep cleaning of your teeth. Gum disease is caused by the germs (bacteria) which live in your mouth. The bacteria stick to your teeth, irritate the gums and make them bleed. Gum disease can eventually destroy the gum and bone which support your teeth.

You will have already received some treatment for your gum disease. This would have included teaching you how to clean your teeth thoroughly to remove the plaque above the gum. The dentist or hygienist will have cleaned (scaled) your teeth to remove tartar and plaque above the gum. But you still have some gum disease remaining which needs periodontal surgery to treat the gums and surrounding teeth and bone.

What happens during periodontal surgery?
You will be given a local anaesthetic injection to numb the gum.

- We will then make a cut around the edge of the gum and carefully lift the gum away from the teeth so that we can see the roots of the teeth. This allows us to remove more plaque and tartar than we can when the gum is covering the roots.
- The procedure involves the careful use of fine powered and hand-operated cleaning instruments on the tooth surfaces.
- Sometimes we will re-shape gum and bone to allow for better cleaning.
- We might be able to apply some material, with the aim of regenerating (re-growing) bone and attachment on your teeth.
- Once we have cleaned the roots, the gum is held in place with a few stitches that will be removed in 1-2 weeks.

Why you should have periodontal surgery
By lifting the gum away from the teeth we can see the roots better and perform more thorough cleaning and plaque removal, allowing us to control the gum disease better. By re-shaping the gum we can make it easier for you to clean the teeth and maintain better gum health.

However, the result of the surgery will depend on how well you continue to brush your teeth in the future and how severe your disease was at the start of treatment.
What are the risks?

- The gums will feel sore after the surgery and you may need to take painkillers, for example paracetamol, for a few days (as prescribed on the packet).
- Occasionally the gums may bleed after surgery and you may also experience bruising and swelling of the gums or the face near the treated teeth.
- The teeth may feel looser after the surgery but this is usually temporary.
- The teeth may become sensitive to hot, cold or sweet substances.

You may notice that spaces appear between the teeth and the teeth may also appear longer.

Are there other options?

No treatment
The result of not having treatment will depend on how severe your gum disease is. With no treatment the gum disease could get worse, your teeth might become painful and you may lose your teeth sooner.

Regular scaling by the dentist or hygienist
This may still be necessary after the surgery, but it is usually needed on fewer teeth after the surgery.

Extractions (removal) of some teeth
Extraction of teeth might be an acceptable alternative if your gum disease is severe. This might mean that you need replacement teeth, such as a denture or bridge, and you may need to return to your own dentist for this treatment. Some people find it easier and more enjoyable to eat with natural teeth than a denture. However, if your front teeth have a poor appearance a denture may look better. Extractions would reduce the time spent treating your gums now and in the future.

How you can prepare for periodontal surgery

Smoking
If you smoke tobacco we recommend that you quit smoking. If you do not want to, or cannot quit, we recommend that you stop smoking for at least 2 weeks after the surgery because this will help your gums heal better. If you would like support to stop smoking you can contact Guy’s and St Thomas’ stop smoking service, t: 020 7188 0995, e: stopsmoking@gstt.nhs.uk.

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

Consent – asking for your consent
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?
You might feel some discomfort when we give you the local anaesthetic injection to numb the areas where we will be performing the surgery, but this should ease fairly quickly.

After the procedure?
After the procedure you will not be able to brush the treated teeth immediately, so you will need to use an antiseptic mouthwash for at least one to two weeks.

What you need to do after you go home
You will be able to return home straight away after the surgery however, you will need to follow the aftercare instructions given to you by the dentist performing your surgery. This will vary depending on the treatment you receive.

Follow-up appointments
You will need a follow-up appointment 7-10 days after surgery, often to remove stitches. This may be followed by more appointments for reviews and gentle cleaning. The routine you will need to follow is often decided about 3 months after surgery. These appointments will be organised before you leave hospital, or sent to you by post.

Contact us
If you have any questions or concerns about periodontal treatment, please contact the periodontology department, t: 020 7188 4941, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm. If it is out of hours and an emergency, go to your nearest Emergency Department (A&E).

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit w: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

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, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm

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.

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<th>t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS)</th>
<th>e: <a href="mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk">pals@gstt.nhs.uk</a></th>
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<tr>
<td>t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints)</td>
<td>e: <a href="mailto:complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk">complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk</a></td>
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NHS 111
This service 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     | w: www.111.nhs.uk |

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Our values: Put patients first | Take pride in what we do | Respect others | Strive to be the best | Act with integrity