

# Periodontal (gum) surgery

The aim of this information sheet is to help answer some of the questions you may have about having periodontal surgery. 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 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 cleaned 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 germs (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 the 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 was possible when the gum was covering the roots.
- The procedure then involves the careful use of fine powered and hand operated cleaning instruments on the tooth surfaces.
- Occasionally we will remove some of the gum to reshape it.
- Once we have cleaned the roots the gum is replaced and held in place with a few stitches that will be removed seven to ten days later.

## What are the benefits – why should I 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 reshaping 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.
- Your 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 any other alternatives?

**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 may become painful and you may lose your teeth sooner.

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

**Extraction of some teeth:** Removal (extraction) of teeth may be an acceptable alternative if your gum disease is severe. This may 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 can I prepare for periodontal surgery?

**Smoking:** If you smoke tobacco we recommend that you quit smoking. If you do not wish to quit or are unable to quit, we recommend that you stop smoking for at least two weeks after the surgery because this will help your gums heal better. You can contact the free NHS smoking helpline on 0800 022 4 322.

**Medical conditions:** Please make sure that 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.

## Asking for your consent

We want to involve you in all the decisions about your care and treatment. If you decide to go ahead, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This confirms that you agree to have the procedure and understand what it involves. You should receive the leaflet, **Helping you decide: our consent policy**, which gives you more information. If you do not, please ask us for one.

## Will I feel any pain?

You may feel some discomfort when we give you the local anaesthetic injection to numb the areas where we will be performing the gum surgery, but this should ease fairly quickly.

## What happens 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 do I need to do after I 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.

## Will I have a follow-up appointment?

You will need a follow up appointment seven to ten days after surgery, often to remove stitches. This may be followed by further appointments in the week after this for reviews and gentle cleaning. The regime for treatment is often assessed around three months after surgery. These appointments will either be organised before you leave hospital, or by post.

## Who can I contact for more information?

If you have any questions or concerns about periodontal surgery, please contact the Periodontology department on 0207 188 4941, between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday. If it is out of hours and an emergency, go to your nearest Accident and Emergency Department (A&E).

### Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about periodontal surgery, please contact the **periodontology department** on **0207 188 4941**, between **9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday**.

If it is out of hours and an emergency, go to your nearest accident and emergency (A&E) department.

### Pharmacy medicines helpline

For information about any medicines that you have been prescribed at Guy's and St Thomas' hospitals, you can speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

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

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:

e: 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas'      t: 020 7188 8803 at Guy's      e: [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

### Language support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch using the following contact details.

t: 020 7188 8815      fax: 020 7188 5953

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