

Corrective Jaw Surgery

Jaw growth is a slow and gradual process. Occasionally, something may go wrong with this process and the upper and lower jaws may grow at different rates.

UNEQUAL JAW GROWTH—A CAUSE FOR CONCERN

One or both jaws may grow too much or too little. The resulting abnormality may interfere with proper teeth alignment, speaking and chewing. The tongue and lips may be forced to move awkwardly during speech and swallowing in an attempt to compensate for the jaw malrelationship. There may be a speech defect or excessive mouth breathing.



An improper bite may threaten the long-term health of the gums and teeth. The jaw joint (TMJ) can also be adversely affected by a jaw malrelationship. In addition, jaws of different sizes—that don't match—can affect appearance.

TREATMENT

When unequal jaw growth is the source of the problem, corrective jaw surgery may be necessary. Orthodontic treatment (braces or other appliances) may also be needed to allow the teeth to align properly. Corrective jaw surgery involves moving all or part of the upper

and/or lower jaw into a more favorable position. For example, the entire jaw can be moved backward if it's too large. The goal of treatment is to improve function and restore facial balance.

Some people have facial abnormalities involving just the upper face, cheek bones and nose. These can also be surgically corrected. The bones are repositioned so the facial features are more symmetrical. This is usually accompanied by the return of normal breathing, speaking and eating patterns.

After the jaws are moved into their new position, rubber bands or wires attached to the teeth may be used to fasten the jaws together during healing. Alternatively, rigid internal fixation with miniature screws and plates may be used to allow you to open and close your jaws sooner after corrective surgery.

TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

Take a closer look at your bite and appearance. Does your chin stick out? Does it recede? Do your teeth fit together properly? Do you have “buck” teeth? Are your teeth straight?

If you suspect there's cause for concern, have your oral and maxillofacial surgeon examine your face and bite. ●



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