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**Ashford Hospital**  
London Road  
Ashford, Middlesex  
TW15 3AA  
Tel: **01784 884488**

**St. Peter's Hospital**  
Guildford Road  
Chertsey, Surrey  
KT16 0PZ.  
Tel: **01932 872000**

Website: [www.ashfordstpeters.nhs.uk](http://www.ashfordstpeters.nhs.uk)

## Surgical Removal of Submandibular Gland Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery

# Surgical Removal of Submandibular Gland

## WHAT IS THE SUBMANDIBULAR GLAND?

The submandibular gland is a salivary gland, about the size of a small plum that lies immediately below the lower jaw. Saliva drains from it through a tube that opens on the inside of the mouth under the tongue, immediately behind the lower front teeth. The most common reason for removing the submandibular gland is as a result of infection that occurs if the tubes that drain saliva become blocked. Blockages usually arise as a result of stones.

## WHAT DOES THE OPERATION INVOLVE?

The submandibular gland is removed under a general anaesthetic, i.e. you are put to sleep completely. The operation involves a cut around two inches (5 cm) long in the upper part of the neck, just below the jaw line. Once the gland has been removed the incision is joined with stitches. These usually need to be removed around a week after surgery.

At the end of the operation a small tube is also placed through the skin into the underlying wound to drain any blood which may collect. This is usually removed on the morning following surgery.

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### Further Information

We endeavour to provide an excellent service at all times, but should you have any concerns please, in the first instance, raise these with the Matron, Senior Nurse or Manager on duty.

If they cannot resolve your concern, please contact our Patient Experience Team on 01932 723553 or email [asp-tr.patient.advice@nhs.net](mailto:asp-tr.patient.advice@nhs.net). If you remain concerned, the team can also advise upon how to make a formal complaint.

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**Author:** Alex Creedon

**Department:** Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery

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## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Additional advice or information regarding this procedure can be obtained by contacting St. Peter's Hospital – telephone **01932 872000** ext **2493** or Ashford Hospital – telephone **01784 884009**.

Further details regarding this procedure can also be obtained by logging on to <http://www.baoms.org.uk/sitemap.asp?id=20>

### **Useful web links**

National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research  
Patient.co.uk

## **WILL ANYTHING ELSE BE DONE WHILE I AM ASLEEP?**

If your gland is being removed because of infection that is caused by a stone, it may also be necessary to make a cut inside the mouth to remove that stone.

## **HOW LONG WILL THE OPERATION TAKE?**

The length of time depends partly upon the degree of difficulty. In an uncomplicated procedure it will take approximately 45 minutes to remove the submandibular gland.

## **WHAT CAN I EXPECT AFTER THE OPERATION?**

You usually require a night in hospital following surgery. The area is unlikely to be very sore but regular painkillers will be prescribed for you. There is relatively little swelling following submandibular gland removal.

## **DO I NEED TO TAKE TIME OFF WORK?**

It is usually advisable to take a week off from work to recover from the surgery. During this time you should avoid any strenuous activity.

## **WILL I HAVE A SCAR?**

All cuts made through the skin leave a scar but the majority of these fade with time and are difficult to see when they are fully healed. It may take several months for your scar to fade but eventually it should blend into the natural folds and contours of your face.

## **WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS?**

It is possible to experience bleeding from the wound, but this is unlikely to be a problem. If this occurs, it usually does so within the first 12 hours of surgery, hence the need for you to stay in hospital overnight.

Infection is uncommon but your surgeon may prescribe you a short course of antibiotics if this is thought to be necessary.

## **THE SURGEON TELLS ME THAT DAMAGE TO NERVES IS POSSIBLE. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?**

Most nerve damage occurs as a result of bruising of the nerves since they are held out of the way and protected during surgery. If nerve damage occurs it is usually temporary.

There are three nerves which lie close to the submandibular gland that can be damaged during its removal, all with varying results:

- Weakness of the lower lip – a lower branch of the facial nerve is the nerve most likely to be bruised in the removal of a submandibular gland. If bruising occurs it affects the movement of your lower lip, leading to a slightly crooked smile.
- Numbness of the tongue – the lingual nerve is the nerve that supplies feeling to the side of the tongue. It is rarely bruised but if bruising occurs it results in a tingy or numb feeling in the tongue, similar to the sensation after having an injection at the dentist.
- Restricted tongue movement – the hypoglossal nerve is a nerve that helps make the tongue move. Again, it is rarely bruised but damage can result in a decrease in tongue movement.

## **IS PERMANENT NERVE DAMAGE POSSIBLE?**

Most nerve damage nerve is temporary although it can take several months to recover. Permanent damage is, however, possible, but usually only occurs in only the most difficult cases.

## **IF A SALIVARY GLAND IS REMOVED WILL I BE LEFT WITH A DRY MOUTH?**

The removal of one submandibular gland will not have an impact on the amount of saliva that you produce. There are many other salivary glands left in and around the mouth that will still keep it moist.