

## Arthrocentesis

### What is arthrocentesis?

Arthrocentesis is a procedure during which the jaw joint is washed out with sterile fluid. It aims to return the disc of cartilage to its normal position within the joint thus resolving symptoms.

### What does this procedure involve?

This procedure usually takes place under a general anaesthetic. Whilst you are asleep two small needles will be inserted into the jaw joint. One of these needles allows sterile fluid to be pumped into the joint under pressure. The second needle allows fluid to be drained out of the joint.

### What are the symptoms that have led to me having this procedure?

This procedure is most commonly used to treat temporomandibular joint dysfunction (TMD). Symptoms of TMD include: jaw and facial pain, jaw joint noises such as clicking, earache, headache, limited mouth opening, and jaw locking.

These symptoms are usually worse in a time of increased stress or whilst functioning.

### What are the alternatives?

The alternative to this option is conservative management including soft diet, analgesics, local heat, jaw exercises, bite raising appliances and antidepressant therapy used for chronic pain.

### What are the potential risks and side effects?

The main risk is that the procedure will be unsuccessful in resolving the TMD symptoms.

Complications are rare (2-10%):

- Unsuccessful entry into the jaw joint because of limited motion of the jaw joint.
- Worsening of present TMD symptoms.
- Ear problems (<9%) including inflammation of the ear canal, middle or inner ear infection, vertigo, perforation of the eardrum, and temporary or permanent hearing loss.
- Numbness (<2.5%) either temporary or permanent of certain areas of skin the jaw region.
- Facial muscle weakness (<1%) either temporary or permanent, due to injury of the facial nerve resulting in difficulty wrinkling or raising eyebrows or tightly closing eyelids.

### How will I feel afterwards?

The area in and around the jaw joint will feel uncomfortable for a couple of days following the procedure. You may feel it necessary to take simple analgesia e.g., ibuprofen. There is likely to be some swelling in front of the ear. It may be difficult to open your jaw for a few weeks.

### How long will I be in the hospital?

You are usually able to leave the hospital on the same day as the procedure.

### How soon will I be able to resume normal activities?

Generally, there are no limits to physical activity or use of the jaw. Your surgeon may give you advice about jaw exercises and is likely to recommend a soft diet for a few days to weeks.

## Will I have to come back to the hospital?

You will need to return a few weeks after surgery to have your jaw joint checked by your surgeon. Arthrocentesis is not always successful, and it can take several months for improvements to be noticed.

## Consent

Although you consent for this treatment, you may at any time after that withdraw such consent. Please discuss this with your medical team.

## Sources of information

British Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons, [www.baoms.org.uk](http://www.baoms.org.uk)

## Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

## Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the patient experience team on 0300 131 4784 or [esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net](mailto:esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net).

## Hand hygiene

We are committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

## Other formats

**If you require any of our leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department on 0300 131 4434 or [esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net](mailto:esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net)**

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

---

---

## Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:

Mr C J Surwald - Maxillofacial Consultant.

Mr M Shastri - Maxillofacial Consultant.

The directorate group that have agreed this patient information leaflet:

Diagnostic, Anaesthetic and Surgery - Outpatients:

Next review date: June 2027

Responsible Clinician: Julia Cousins, Hannah Williams

© East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust – [www.esht.nhs.uk](http://www.esht.nhs.uk)