
About the oral and maxillofacial surgery and orthodontics department

Many minor and more serious conditions can affect the complex structures that form our face including our skin, eyes, muscles, mouth, jaws, teeth, tongue, underlying bones and air sinuses. Some of these conditions can affect other areas of the body, which is why a holistic approach to care is important.

Services provided

In the oral and maxillofacial surgery department at Addenbrooke's, we provide services to the local population to diagnose and treat conditions of the face and mouth. We also work closely with other departments at Addenbrooke's particularly with:

- Anaesthetics
- Children's services
- Dermatology
- Ear, nose and throat
- Intensive care
- Neurosurgery
- Oncology
- Ophthalmology
- Orthodontics
- Plastic surgery
- Restorative dentistry

What is oral surgery and oral medicine?

Oral surgery includes all conditions affecting the teeth, gums and their supporting (alveolar) bone, which is outside the scope of 'usual' dental surgery (ie the restoration of teeth, crowns, bridges and other prostheses). Oral surgery therefore includes the treatment of:

- Infection of the teeth, gums and other oral tissue
- Impacted teeth (teeth growing sideways or downwards instead of through the gum)
- Any conditions or disease affecting the mouth
- Tumours of the mouth

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- Cysts of the jaw

Who are oral and maxillofacial surgeons?

Oral and maxillofacial surgeons are senior members of the oral and maxillofacial department's team. They specialise in the diagnosis and treatment of diseases of the face, mouth and jaws. They have two undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications in both Medicine (eg MB BS, FRCS) and Dental Surgery (eg BDS, FDSRCS) and an additional specialist training (FRCS MaxFac) and experience in the surgical anatomy and pathology of conditions affecting the face, mouth, jaws and the rest of face and skull.

What do oral and maxillofacial surgeons do?

Oral and maxillofacial surgeons diagnose and treat conditions of the mouth, face and adjacent structures, usually in hospital environments. For example they treat developmental conditions such as cleft palates and lips, traumatic injuries such as broken facial skeleton and jaws, and acquired conditions such as mouth and facial cancers. They need to have specialist training and experience in the treatment of the face and the mouth cavity including the teeth. For this reason the majority now are qualified in both dental surgery and medicine and undergo many years of specialist training. Some oral and maxillofacial surgeons further specialise for example in the treatment of cancer, in oral medicine or in reconstructive surgery.

Who are orthodontists?

Orthodontists are specialist dental surgeons who have undergone a formal specialist training in deformities affecting the position of teeth and facial growth. They are specialised dentists, who diagnose and treat abnormalities in the alignment of teeth and associated structures. They have additional qualifications in orthodontics. They work closely with surgeons to perform surgical work prior to the use of orthodontic appliances (such as 'braces'). Some malocclusions (deformities of the dental bite) can be corrected with 'braces' but some need surgery as well.