

# How to improve mouth opening after infection or surgery

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Sometimes a dental infection or surgical procedure can cause reduced mouth opening. It occurs because the muscles responsible for opening and closing your mouth are affected. Once the acute condition settles, your mouth opening should improve. This can take time and following the exercises below should help.

We will provide you with a pack of wooden spatulas. Firstly, place the spatulas on top of each other (as shown in the first photograph) and put them to one side of your mouth to the limit of your opening, just as it starts to feel uncomfortable. Note the number or place a rubber band around them. This is your baseline value.



After a minute, remove the spatulas from your mouth. Rest for one minute and then repeat the mouth opening to the limit of comfort and hold for another minute. Repeat this 10 times to complete a set of stretching.



Repeat these exercises five times a day. You should notice your mouth opening starts to improve as your jaw muscles are gently stretched. When possible, either at the start of the next set or at the start of the next day, add one spatula to the middle of the stack while it is in your mouth (as in second photo). This will gently stretch your jaw muscles and avoid damaging your teeth. Continue the exercises as before with the larger stack of spatulas (10 one minute reps five times a day).

As each day goes by you should notice that the number of spatulas you start with increases as your mouth opening improves. The most important aspect of this exercise is gradual stretching of the muscles with frequent daily repetitions.

## Contact details

If you require any further advice, please contact the Oral and Maxillofacial Department during working hours if possible.

Lincoln County Hospital: 01522 573495

For out of hours emergencies please contact the hospital switchboard on 01522 512512 and ask for the Maxillofacial SHO on call.

## References

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet please email [patient.information@ulh.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@ulh.nhs.uk)

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