

Let's Talk About...

Jaw, Wired

Your child is going to have a procedure called Maxillary- mandibular fixation (MMF). In this procedure, the surgeon will wire your child's jaws together. This is done to fix problems of the jaw or when the jaw is not placed the right way. The usual reason for jaw wiring is damage to the jaw (for example bicycle accidents, falls, car accidents, or other damage to the face).

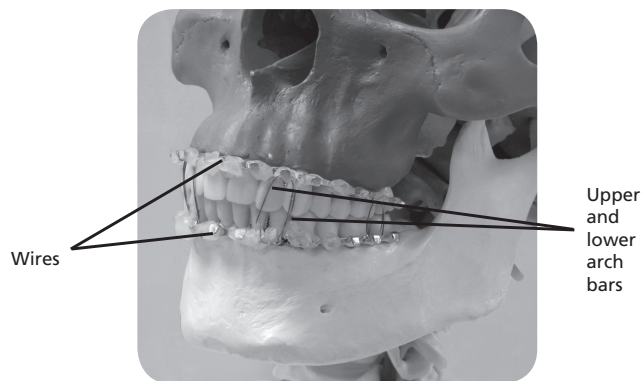
Where will the surgeon put the wires?

The surgeon will put arch bars and thin wires in your child's mouth. The surgeon places the arch bars and then attaches the wires to the arch bars. There are two arch bars, one is attached to the upper gum and goes from the back tooth on one side all the way around to the back tooth on the other side. The second arch is attached in the same way on the lower gum. Then the surgeon attaches small wires from the upper arch bar to the lower arch bar. This wires the jaw closed. Most often there are two wires in the back near the rear teeth, and two at the front. (See picture above). For smaller children, arch bars cannot be placed due to the lack of strong teeth. In that circumstance your surgeon might elect to perform an alternative procedure called circummandibular wiring. In this procedure separate wires are placed around the maxilla and the mandible and then secured to each other to close the jaw.

What kind of mouth care should my child have after surgery?

Your child needs to clean his mouth regularly, at least twice a day. Your child may swish and spit salt water (normal saline) to help keep his mouth clean.

Do not use any sponges in your child's mouth!



The sponge may stick to the wires. It is important for your child to brush his teeth. There are no limits about brushing his teeth. Your child's gums may be tender so he may want to use a soft tooth brush. Also, be sure your child's lips are always kept moist.

The wires may cause the skin inside the mouth to rub and tear the skin inside the mouth. Make sure you look inside your child's mouth every day. You can cover the sharp ends of the wires with dental wax to prevent sores inside the mouth. Simply rub the wax on the wire ends. When the wax wears off, you need to put it on again. You can find dental wax at your local pharmacy or dental clinic.

What kind of food can my child eat?

Your child should only eat pureed or soft foods. While you are in the hospital a dietician will talk to you about your child's diet changes. Your child should always sit up while he eats. It may be harder for your child to eat or he may not want to eat as much. It is common for children with a wired jaw to lose a few pounds, at first, while adjusting the food. The dietician will teach you how to "power pack" meals. This is a way to increase the calories in food while your child eats less.

Are there any emergencies I should watch for?

After the surgeon wires the jaws, it will be hard for your child to spit things out. There is a chance your child would choke and get food and liquids in the lungs. If your child feels like he's going to throw up, watch him closely for throwing up. If your child throws up, encourage him to swallow the fluid or spit it out through the sides of his mouth. If your child cannot catch his breath or chokes on vomit, then you need to cut the wires with the wire cutters you received from the hospital.

Location of wires and where to cut.



The main thing to remember is to make sure your child can breathe. In an emergency where your child cannot breathe, you need to cut the wires. Cut the wires straight across (See picture above).

After you cut the wires, call your child's surgeon or go to the emergency room. The surgeon may need to do the surgery again. Keep wire cutters with you all the time, in case of an emergency like this. At school, your child needs to have the cutters with him and if he vomits, the wires need to be cut.

If your child has any of the following, call your child's surgeon or go to the emergency room right away:

- Your child complains that he can't feel his lip or has trouble moving his tongue
- Your child has trouble breathing
- Your child has pain and pain medicine does not help
- Your child's mouth is bleeding
- Your child is throwing up
- The jaw wires are broken or loose