

Wearing a mandibular advancement splint

This leaflet explains more about wearing a mandibular advancement splint. It includes details of the benefits, risks and what you can expect from your appointment with the orthodontist. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is a mandibular advancement splint?

A mandibular advancement splint is a dental appliance that is custom-made to fit over your upper and lower teeth. It is designed to bring your lower jaw forward during sleep, which should open your airway to allow air to flow more freely.



Why do I need a mandibular advancement splint?

Mandibular advancement splints are used for the treatment of habitual snoring, mild to moderate obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA) and for those who cannot tolerate continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) therapy (a breathing device which delivers a continuous supply of pressurised air to assist with breathing whilst asleep).

What is obstructive sleep apnoea?

OSA is a condition where the walls of the throat relax and narrow during sleep, interrupting normal breathing. This can lead to a decrease in oxygen levels within the blood, and disrupted sleep, which can result in daytime sleepiness. Snoring may be an indicator that you are suffering from OSA.

You are more likely to have OSA if you:

- are overweight and/or have a wide neck
- experience excessive fluid retention (oedema)
- drink alcohol
- smoke
- have diabetes
- have certain allergies
- have a particular structure to your neck/jaw
- take certain medications, especially sedatives
- have a family history of OSA.

What are the benefits of wearing a mandibular advancement splint?

The splint is designed to reduce your symptoms. Some patients experience significant improvement of their symptoms, while others report none.

In order to get the most benefit from this appliance, it must be worn whenever you are sleeping.

What are the risks?

Wearing a mandibular advancement splint is safe, but like all treatments, it may produce some unpleasant side effects.

Each patient responds differently to this treatment, but side effects can include:

- excessive salivation or a dry mouth
- pain in the jaw joints and muscles of the face
- gum irritation
- tenderness of the teeth
- gagging
- slight movement in the positioning of the teeth
- lack of sleep (due to an unfamiliar appliance in your mouth).

The majority of side effects will resolve with time.

What will happen at my first appointment with the orthodontist?

The first appointment with the orthodontist is to assess your dental health and confirm your suitability for this device. In order to wear a mandibular advancement splint successfully, it is very important that your dental health is at a good level. Firstly, you must have enough teeth remaining for the splint to stay in position. If your teeth and gums are not healthy, wearing the splint can cause your symptoms to worsen, and can even lead to tooth-loss.

An x-ray may need to be taken in order to establish your level of dental health, and a dental impression will be taken to record your bite. This is then sent to our laboratory so that your splint can be made. A further appointment will be arranged a few weeks later for you to have the device fitted.

How do I use my splint at home?

You should wear your splint while you sleep. It may take time to get used to having something in your mouth, so you may wish to try not sleeping with it initially. Instead, wear it for a few hours while you are relaxing or watching TV – this will allow for a period of getting used to having something in your mouth. You may notice that your saliva production increases when you are wearing the splint. Don't worry – this is normal and will reduce in time.

Once you get used to wearing the splint, start wearing it through the night.

What if I forget to wear my splint?

If snoring is the main problem, your snoring will return if you forget to wear the device. If you suffer from OSA, you may feel tired the following day.

How do I care for my splint?

As the splint is worn for a number of hours whilst you sleep, it is important that good oral hygiene is maintained to avoid any dental disease. You should brush your teeth before inserting the appliance into your mouth. When you wake up, the splint should be removed and cleaned using a little brush and soap. Rinse thoroughly with clean water before using it again. Occasional cleaning with a denture cleaning fluid can be beneficial, but it is important that you do not use hot water, as this can cause your splint to soften and change shape.

Your splint should be stored in a cool, safe place. A plastic pot is ideal. If you have been given your models, please look after them and bring them along to any review appointments.

If you lose or damage your device, please contact the orthodontist who provided it. Mandibular advancement splints are expensive to make, so you may be charged for a replacement.

Will I need a follow-up appointment?

If your splint has been made at St George's, a routine follow-up appointment will be arranged for three months after you are fitted for your device. This appointment is to check the device and your symptoms.

The sleep clinic may provide a follow-up appointment in specific circumstances.

Further useful information

British Orthodontic Society

Web: www.bos.org.uk/public-patients/orthodontics-for-adults/snoring-sleep-apnea

British Snoring and Sleep Apnoea Society

Web: www.britishsnoring.co.uk

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your device or about anything you have read in this leaflet, please either contact the orthodontic department on **020 8725 1233** or the sleep clinic on **020 8725 1667**.

If your device has been made by your dentist, you should speak directly to them.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

