

Alveolar Bone Graft

Information for patients



What is an Alveolar Bone Graft (ABG)?

Alveolar is another word for gum.

Graft is the name used when something is taken from one bit of the body and put into another. A piece of bone from your hip will be put into your gum.

During the operation the surgeon will take a small amount of bone from the hip area and use this to fill the gap in the top gum area. The gum is carefully stitched over the bone graft area to help it heal.

Why do I need to have an ABG?

Your gum holds your teeth in the right place. For some children who were born with a cleft lip and/or a cleft palate, there is a gap in the gum. This means the gum cannot hold onto the teeth properly and they might become loose.

One way of helping the gum to work properly is to have an alveolar bone graft (ABG). Your gum is made from mucosa – the red outer bit – with bone inside. An ABG is where a little bit of bone is taken from your hip and put inside your gum to make it stronger.

When will I have my operation?

The timing of the operation depends on the development of your second teeth also called your (permanent or adult) teeth, and is often around 8+ years. The best time will be decided by the surgeon (the doctor who does the operation) and the orthodontist (the doctor who changes the position of the teeth using braces).

What happens before the ABG?

For some children the gap in the gum has to be made bigger to make room for the bone to go into. The orthodontist will use different kinds of braces to gently open the gap. It can take a few months to make the gap big enough, sometimes up to a year or longer.

The braces can trap food and sometimes make it more difficult to clean your teeth properly. It is important to keep your teeth really clean using a toothbrush with a small head and adult toothpaste. You should avoid sticky foods. Your orthodontist can offer more advice.

Where will I have my operation?

You will have your operation in Oxford at the Children's Hospital. You will stay on Robin's Ward, Tom's ward or Mel's ward you will have a TV and DVD's, plus computer games to play as well as a range of other toys and activities to occupy you throughout your stay. You will be looked after by a nurse who you can always ask if you have any questions or are worried about anything. You are welcome to bring your own tablet - you can link up to the hospital WiFi.

Can someone stay with me?

Yes, one of your parents or carers will be able to stay with you next to your bed. Most children need to stay in hospital for just one night.

What should I bring with me?

You will need to bring your nightclothes or shorts and T-shirt, toiletries including a soft toothbrush, and maybe one or two of your favourite toys, books or magazines.

Why can't I have anything to eat or drink before my operation?

It is very important not to eat or drink anything before your operation. This is because it can make you sick during or after your operation. One of the nurses will tell you and your parents when you can have your last food and drink.

What happens on the day of the operation?

Before your operation the surgeon will come to see you. He will talk to you and your parents or carers and ask them to sign the form that allows them to carry out the operation. An anaesthetist will also visit you. The anaesthetist is the doctor who gives you medicine to make you sleep all the way through your operation. This medicine is given through a tiny tube in the back of your hand. This won't hurt because a special cream will be put onto the back of your hand which makes the skin numb so you won't feel it.

Can someone come to the anaesthetic room with me?

You will go to a different room when you are ready for your operation. This is the anaesthetic room where you will have the medicine to make you go to sleep. One of your parents or carers can come with you. You can tell the doctor what sort of things you want to dream about.

What is it like going to sleep for an operation?

When the medicine goes into your hand through the tube you will start to feel sleepy. By the time you have told the doctor what you want to dream about, you will have fallen asleep.

How long will I be asleep?

You will be asleep until your operation is finished. This is different for everyone but usually takes up to two hours. When the operation is finished you will wake up in the recovery room. You will probably still feel very sleepy and most people don't even remember this bit. When you have woken up your parents or your carer will come to collect you and take you back to the ward with your nurse.

What will I look like?

Your face might look a bit swollen. You will have a little plaster (dressing) on your hip. You will have some stitches in your mouth but they will dissolve so you don't need to have them taken out. You will also have some stitches in your hip which will dissolve as well.

Will it hurt? What will it feel like?

We will give you medicine to stop your mouth and hip hurting. If it does hurt, tell a nurse who will be able to help. Occasionally children are sick after their operation. This is because some blood has got into their tummy during the operation. This does not harm you.

When can I eat and drink?

You can usually have a drink straight after your operation as long as you are not feeling sick. You will be able to eat very sloppy foods such as yoghurts, ice-cream and soup the next day. After food you must rinse your mouth out with water to keep it clean.

What kind of foods can I eat after my operation?

To help your mouth to heal, you will need to have soft foods followed by a drink of water for the next 4 weeks to keep your mouth clean. Please see attached diet sheet for a list of suggestions. You should not have hard foods such as toast, crisps, biscuits or pointy-like chips. It is better to drink from a cup and avoid straws and sports bottles for 4 weeks. You can also use a special numbing spray on your gum to help with the pain.

Can I brush my teeth?

You should brush all your teeth very carefully using a very soft toothbrush and adult toothpaste to clean the teeth on each side of the stitches. We will give you mouthwash to use in the hospital and to take home. You should use this twice a day to help keep your mouth clean. The stitches in your mouth will slowly dissolve over the next few weeks.

When can I go home?

You can go home the next day if the Doctor thinks you are well enough and you do not feel sick or have a temperature.

What about school and sports?

You can go back to school 2 weeks after your operation. You must avoid 'contact' sports and trampolining for six weeks after your operation to allow the bone graft to heal.

Will I have to come back to the hospital?

A nurse specialist will contact you at home to check everything is ok. You will then need to come back to the hospital 2 weeks after your operation. This is so we can check that your gum and hip have healed up.

Who can I speak to if I am worried or have any questions?

We hope this leaflet has helped you to understand what will happen when you come into hospital. If you have any other questions or if you are worried about anything, you can ask your Mum or Dad or one of the doctors or nurses in clinic.

Here are some telephone numbers:

You can telephone the cleft team on:

01865 231 450

You can telephone Robin's ward on:

01865 231 254 or 01865 231 255

You can also talk to your family doctor.

You can also find information about this operation on the following website: **www.clapa.com**

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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