



Facial Trauma

We as Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons are well trained and skilled in the proper treatment of many facial injuries. Through our extensive training and surgical experience we are uniquely qualified to manage and treat facial trauma. We understand how the treatment provided will influence the patient's long term function and appearance.

Dr. Morrison and Kempers are on staff at local hospitals and deliver emergency room coverage for facial injuries, which include the following conditions.

- Facial lacerations
- Intra-oral lacerations
- Avulsed (knocked out) teeth
- Fractured facial bones (cheek, nose or eye socket)
- Fractured jaws (upper and lower jaw)

The Nature of Maxillofacial Trauma

There are a number of possible causes of facial trauma. Motor vehicle accidents, accidental falls, sports injuries, interpersonal violence and work related injuries. Types of facial injuries can range from injuries of teeth to extremely severe injuries of the skin and bones of the face. Typically, facial injuries are classified as either soft tissue injuries (skin and gums), bone injuries (fractures), or injuries to special regions (such as the eyes, facial nerves or the salivary glands).

Soft Tissue Injuries of the Maxillofacial Region

When soft tissue injuries such as lacerations occur on the face, they are repaired by suturing. In addition, to the obvious concern of providing a repair that yields the best cosmetic result possible, care is taken to inspect for and treat injuries to structures such as facial nerves, salivary glands and salivary ducts (or

outflow channels). Dr. Morrison and Dr. Kempers are well-trained oral and maxillofacial surgeons and are proficient at diagnosing and treating all types of facial lacerations.

Bone Injuries of the Maxillofacial Region

Fractures of the bones of the face are treated in a manner similar to the fractures in other parts of the body. The specific treatment is determined by various factors. Factors include the location and the severity of the fracture, the age and general health of the patient. When an arm or a leg is fractured, a cast is often applied to stabilize the bone to allow for proper healing. Since a cast cannot be placed on the face, other means have been developed to stabilize facial fractures.

One of these options involves wiring the jaws together for certain fractures of the upper and/or lower jaw. Certain other types of fractures of the jaw are best treated and stabilized by the surgical placement of small plates and screws at the wound site. This technique of treatment can often allow for healing and the jaws do not need to be wired together. This technique is called "rigid fixation" of a fracture. The relatively recent development and use of rigid fixation has profoundly improved the recovery period for many patients, allowing them an early return to normal function.

The treatment of facial fractures requires a thorough process. Patient cooperation is vital to a successful outcome. The post-operative facial appearance should be minimally changed. Accessing the facial bones are made through the fewest incisions necessary. The incisions that are necessary are designed to be small and, whenever possible, are placed so that the resultant scar is hidden.

Injuries to the Teeth and Surrounding Dental Structures

Isolated injuries to teeth are quite common and may require the expertise of various dental specialists. Oral surgeons usually are involved in treating fractures in the supporting bone or in replanting teeth that have been displaced or knocked out. These types of injuries are treated by one of a number of forms of splinting (stabilizing by wiring or bonding teeth together). If a tooth is knocked out, it should be placed in salt water or milk. The sooner the tooth is re-inserted into the dental socket, the better chance it will survive. Therefore, the patient should see a dentist or oral surgeon as soon as possible. After one hour the chance of failure increases dramatically. Never attempt to wipe the tooth off, since remnants of the ligament that hold the tooth in the jaw are attached and are vital to the success of replanting the tooth. Other dental specialists may be called upon such as endodontists, who may perform root canal therapy, and/or restorative dentists who may need to repair or rebuild fractured teeth. In the event that injured

teeth cannot be saved or repaired, dental implants are often now utilized as replacements for missing teeth.

The proper treatment of facial injuries is now the realm of specialists who are well versed in emergency care, acute treatment, long term reconstruction and rehabilitation of the patient.