permanently altered or lost altogether. Even when sensation is lost, the lip will still look and move normally.

- In less than 10% of cases the fixing plates used to reposition the jaws may become infected and need to be removed. However this is usually after they have done their job.

- In a few cases the bite may require further adjustment, and a second operation to adjust the fixing plates may be necessary.

- More complicated operations, such as those involving cleft palates or large movements on an unusual bite, are at greater risk of relapse.

Useful contacts
Orthodontic departments, open Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm:
Chase Farm Hospital: 020 8375 2235
Barnet Hospital: 020 8216 4266
Edgware Hospital: 020 3758 2408

If you experience any problems after surgery, please call Barnet Hospital switchboard on 020 3758 2000 and ask for the on-call senior house officer in maxillofacial surgery.
Orthognathic surgery is an operation to correct the position of the upper and lower jaws to enable the teeth to meet together correctly and improve your facial profile. This involves a combination of orthodontic treatment and jaw surgery, and can take up to three years to complete.

Your braces remain in position during the operation to help the surgeon position the jaws correctly. Small metal plates or screws are used to secure the new position of your jaws. The plates and screws lie beneath the gum and cannot be seen. Your orthodontist will then review your progress a week later and make adjustments.

After surgery the brace remains in place for up to 12 months, during which time the teeth are finely adjusted using elastic bands. Once the brace has been removed, retainers are fitted. You will continue to be reviewed in the maxillofacial clinic for two to five years.

After surgery it is likely you will experience some numbness, swelling and bruising. Swelling will be most severe 36-48 hours after surgery and will usually reduce over the next two weeks.

After surgery you may find it uncomfortable to breathe through your nose and may experience a sore throat.

Why is surgery needed?
If the jaws are misaligned it is not always possible to correct the positioning of your teeth using orthodontics alone. Orthognathic surgery enables correction of larger jaw discrepancies. The surgery is carried out by the oral maxillofacial team.

Stages of treatment
Your maxillofacial surgeon and orthodontist will plan your treatment together. You may need to have your wisdom teeth removed before starting treatment.

You will wear fixed braces for 18-24 months before surgery.

After the operation
After surgery it is likely you will experience some numbness, swelling and bruising. Swelling will be most severe 36-48 hours after surgery and will usually reduce over the next two weeks.

After surgery you may find it uncomfortable to breathe through your nose and may experience a sore throat.

Time off after surgery
Most patients remain in hospital for one or two nights after surgery. You should consider taking two to four weeks off work or your studies to recover. You should also avoid contact sports for six to eight weeks after the operation.

Diet
Eating and drinking immediately after surgery will aid your recovery. Your ability to open and close your mouth will be limited by the elastic bands and swelling, but we ask that you continue to brush your teeth thoroughly.

You will need to follow a soft diet for six weeks to allow your jaws to heal.

In the first one to two weeks, we advise you to follow a liquid/puree diet. You should gradually progress to soft foods such as pasta, rice and mashed potato in weeks three to six until you are able to return to a normal diet.

Side effects and complications
Following surgery you may experience some pain, bleeding, bruising and swelling.

The following complications are fortunately rare, but it is important that you are aware of them.

• While the upper lip usually recovers quickly, it can sometimes take six to nine months for feeling to return to the lower lip. In some cases sensation may be