

Cleft Palate Repair Surgery

Before the Surgery:

- Your child's surgeon will talk with about you the best surgical approach for the repair. Depending on your surgeon's preference, your child may be scheduled for a pre-operative visit.
- You should shift your child from the bottle and to a Sippy cup before the Cleft Palate Repair. Cups should be free flowing with no valves and should have little to no spout.
- You may also practice feeding your child with an oversized spoon turned sideways so that the tip of the spoon does not go past the teeth. Your child will not be permitted to have a pacifier for 3-6 weeks after the palate repair surgery.
- Please don't give your child any ibuprofen products (such as Motrin®, Advil®) for one week before surgery
- A Surgery Scheduler will call you a few days before surgery to tell you when your child has to stop eating and drinking on the evening before and day of surgery. They will also tell you what time to come to the hospital pre-op area and the time of surgery.
- If your child is sick anytime in the week before surgery, call the nurses in the Cleft Lip and Palate Program, to make sure the surgery doesn't need to be rescheduled. The nurses are available Monday through Friday for any concerns/ questions you might have before the surgery.
- The nurses will offer ideas as to the best cups to try. Please bring the cup with you to the hospital the day of surgery.

Good cups to use are:

- Avent Natural Drinking Cup
- Gerber Hard Spout
- Playtex Coolstir

After the Surgery:

- Your child will be watched closely in the Post Anesthesia Recovery Unit (PACU) for 1-2 hours after surgery. As soon as your child is awake, the PACU nurse will call you to join them.
- Your child will usually stay in the hospital for 1-2 nights. Parents/guardians can stay in the room with the child.
- You should make sure you have childcare for siblings while your child is in the hospital.

Feeding After Cleft Palate Surgery:

- Your child will have an IV (tube in a vein) to give them fluids and medicines while they are recovering in the hospital.
- Along with drinking out of a cup, your child's surgeon may suggest a special TenderCare® feeder or a syringe with a Brecht® tubing for feeding. These feeding devices will lower the chance of injury to the surgical site. These devices are stocked at the hospital.
- Sometimes the surgeon will let infants go back to drinking from the bottle they were using before the surgery.

IN CARE OF KIDS

- Within 1-3 days, your child should go back to drinking the same amount of liquids as they were drinking before the surgery.
- For 2-3 weeks, your child will be on a pourable liquid or blenderized diet.
 - A pourable liquid diet includes anything you can put in a blender and add enough liquid to make it a pourable consistency. A dietician will meet with you in the hospital to help instruct you on the pourable diet.
 - We suggest you add liquids that are higher in calories such as cream, whole milk, regular chicken/beef stock.
 - Squeeze packets of pureed foods are a great option. Do not allow your child to put the spout of the squeeze packet past their teeth.
- After _____ weeks, your child may start eating a soft diet.
 - A soft diet includes foods that are not crunchy, hard or sharp and can be eaten with little biting or chewing.
 - Examples are; baby food, soft, over-cooked pasta, scrambled eggs, soft cooked veggies, and ground or finely chopped meats.
- Only an adult should feed your child.

Positioning While Feeding:

Hold your baby in an upright position and feed slowly to prevent choking. Burp often, holding the baby in a sitting position on your lap rather than over your shoulder.

To prevent dehydration, the target volume (amount) of liquids your baby should be taking daily is about _____ ounces a day. This is _____ 8-ounce bottles.

Safety:

- It is very important to protect the surgical site while it is healing. The stitches will dissolve on their own. Complete healing of the palate will take about 6 weeks.
- When in bed, put your baby on their back or side. Your baby should NOT be placed on their tummy with their face down towards the mattress.
- Children must wear elbow restraints at all times for _____ weeks following surgery. These are Velcro restraints that fit over the arm and keep your child from putting their hands to their mouth.
- Restraints should be taken off at least every four hours while your child is awake to exercise the joints and to check the skin.
- You can take the restraints off when you are holding your child or supervising them and able to keep them from putting their hands or other objects in their mouths.
- Only take one splint off at a time so you can supervise and keep your child from putting their hands in their mouth.
- Check the skin under the restraints for red areas. If red areas develop, massage the spot gently.
- The restraints can be worn over a long-sleeve shirt to keep them from irritating and make it harder for your child to take them off. Turn the cuff of the long sleeve shirt up over the bottom of the restraint to help keep them from sliding off.

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Author: Cleft Palate Team | Approved by Patient Education Committee | Valid through 2023

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IN CARE OF KIDS

- Move your child's unrestrained arm fully; bending the elbow and wrist joints several times to keep the joints from getting stiff.
- Restraints are to be worn all night and at nap time.
- You may remove the restraints for bathing. Watch your child closely to be sure they do not try to put their hands in their mouths.

Special care should be taken to avoid injury to the palate. Don't put anything in the mouth beyond the teeth. Do not let siblings or friends feed your child or take off the elbow restraints. Comfort your child when they cry by holding your child, singing to your child, and giving pain medicine as ordered. Supervise all play activities, especially when there are other children involved.

Mouth Care:

- If your child will cooperate, give your child water after they eat to rinse the palate
- You may also use a moist washcloth on your finger and rub along your baby's outer aspects of the gum line both on the upper and lower gum. Don't put your finger past your baby's teeth/gums.

Medicines after Surgery:

Your child will usually go home on acetaminophen (Tylenol®) as well as a narcotic pain medicine such as oxycodone. Depending on your child's surgeon, you may be able to use ibuprofen (Motrin®, Advil®). Do not give ibuprofen unless cleared by your surgeon.

If antibiotics are ordered after surgery, please be sure to follow the directions carefully.

If ear tubes were placed, give eardrops as ordered.

Call with any questions or concerns, or if your child:

- Has an injury to the surgical site.
- Has redness, swelling or drainage that is increasing.
- Has a large amount of bleeding from the nose or mouth.
- Has a fever above 101.5°F for more than 24 hours that doesn't go down after taking Tylenol or ibuprofen (do not take the temperature by mouth)
- Has signs of dehydration: infants/babies less than 3- 4 wet diapers in 24 hours, big decrease in the child's activity level, or a child who is difficult to wake up, not making tears, or has a very dry mouth.
- Has a foul odor from mouth.
- If your child has ear drainage lasting longer than 5 days, please call ENT

For Any Concerns or Questions Please Call:

- The Cleft Nurse at _____ Monday through Friday 8-4:30pm.
- Your surgeon's office at _____.
- To reach the ENT office after hours, please call 720-777-8501. (Anschutz Campus) or 719-305-9045 (Colorado Springs Campus).
- To reach the plastic surgery office after hours please call 720-777-1234 and ask to speak with the plastic surgeon on call.

Follow-Up after Surgery:

Your child should be seen for a follow-up appointment 1-2 weeks after surgery. This will be scheduled by the surgery scheduler at the time the surgery date is scheduled. Then 4-6 weeks after surgery with your surgeon.

If follow-up appointment is not with a Children's Hospital Colorado doctor please call your doctor's office for an appointment.

- To schedule a post-op appointment in 1-2 weeks please call your surgeon's office..
- To schedule a post-op ear evaluation in 4 weeks please call ENT. at 720-777-8501 (Anschutz) or 719-305-9045 (Colorado Springs).

To schedule a post-op appointment in 4-6 weeks with your child's surgeon please call:

- Plastics Office 720-777-6409 option #1
- ENT Office 720-777-8501(Anschutz) or 719-305-9045 (Colorado Springs)
- Other _____

For all other questions:

Call the Cleft Clinic at 720-777-2574 (Anschutz) or 719-305-9579 (Colorado Springs).