

## Children's Services and Surgical Services

# Cleft palate repair – Advice following discharge

By the time of discharge you will be familiar with the specific care of your child. We hope the following information will be a helpful reminder.

### Feeding

By the time of discharge we will expect your baby to be drinking from the bottle or breast. After the palate repair your baby may find taking solids easier than milk. You can mix their milk into their solids. Your baby may need a little time to get used to their new palate. Feeding may take some time to get back to normal. After the operation your baby's palate and back of the throat will be tender and liable to damage by hard or spiky foods. For this reason it is advised that you feed your baby a soft and sloppy diet for three weeks post surgery. Your baby should be given around two to four teaspoons of cooled, boiled water after all medications and feeds to cleanse the stitch line inside the mouth. This should continue for three weeks after the operation. If you have any concerns about your baby's feeding please feel free to contact your cleft nurse specialist or the Ward - the contact details are provided on page three.

### Pain

Your baby will be prescribed some medicines and you will need to have paracetamol and ibuprofen at home. You will be advised how much to give your baby before you leave the hospital. Paracetamol relieves pain. Ibuprofen relieves pain and reduces swelling. Codeine phosphate relieves pain but can cause constipation and drowsiness. It is advisable to try to reduce or wean your baby off the codeine phosphate at the earliest point. You should be able to recognise if your baby appears to be in pain. For the first few days at home give the pain medicines regularly. If your baby does not appear to be in pain slowly reduce the frequency that they are given or remove one of the pain medicines. If you are concerned that the pain medicines are not effective please contact the ward.

### Infection

Infection (which is rare) signs include a red wound inside the mouth, raised temperature and loss of appetite. If your baby has these signs contact the ward directly. A course of antibiotics from your GP may be all that is required. The ward will inform your cleft surgeon.

## Stitches

The stitches in your baby's mouth will dissolve themselves in time and therefore do not need to be removed. They can take up to six weeks to fully dissolve. Sometimes small gaps appear in the stitch line that usually closes again. Please phone for advice if you see this. Normally we leave things alone to heal and reassess in the clinic.

## Other important information

Your baby may be a bit irritable for the next few days. They will settle down into their normal routine shortly.

Dummies are not allowed for three weeks after the surgery as they may prevent the palate healing.

Keep hard toys and objects from damaging the palate for three weeks after surgery.

Your baby may need arm splints on to prevent sucking of fingers and touching the wound. If used they will need to be taken off twice a day to allow your baby to move and for you to moisturise their arms. The palate repair should be strong enough after three weeks to remove the splints. These splints are optional.

If teeth are present you should start cleaning your baby's teeth using a soft brush and children's toothpaste. Caution should be taken when cleaning the top teeth as to not damage the repaired palate. You may notice that your baby's breath smells. This is normal and should disappear with good oral hygiene.

## Grommets information

You must keep your child's ears dry for six weeks after the grommet insertion. When bathing and washing your child's hair please put some vaseline on some cotton wool and put into their ears. They are not allowed to go swimming for six weeks.

## Outpatients follow-up appointment

This is usually three months after your child's operation at your local hospital where you usually see the Cleft Team. An appointment will be sent to you shortly in the post. If this does not happen please contact the Cleft co-ordinator on 01223 596092.

## Advice or support

If you require further information on any aspect of your child's care contact Cleft lip and palate team who are available Monday-Friday 08:00-16:00.  
Telephone: 01223 596272 (24hour answer machine) or ward D2 on 01223 217250.



We are currently working towards a smoke free site. Smoking is only permitted in the designated smoking areas.

For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169

### Help with this leaflet:



If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio format, please ask the department to contact Patient Information: 01223 216032 or

[patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk)



### Document history

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