NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S
When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.℠

Helping Hand™

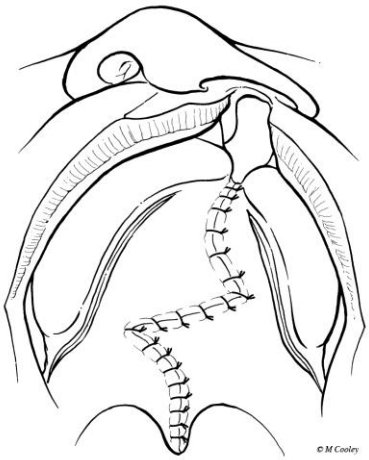
Cleft Palate Repair

Your child's cleft palate (Picture1) has been repaired, and the opening in the roof of the mouth has been closed (Picture 2). There are a few things to know about your child's care at home. Other than these special instructions, your child should be cared for like any child his or her age.

Protecting the Palate

Your child's mouth is still healing and should be protected from injury. The roof of the mouth (the palate) may have no feeling for a while after the surgery. This means that the roof of the mouth could be hurt without you or your child knowing it because the child may not feel pain in this area.

Picture 1 Cleft palate



Picture 2 Cleft palate repair

Listed below are objects that could hurt your child's mouth. **They should be put away or kept out of your child's reach while his palate is healing.**

- Small wooden, metal, or plastic toys
- Toys with small parts
- Sticks
- Toothbrushes
- Knives, forks, and spoons
- Popsicles and their sticks
- Drinking straws
- Suckers
- Thermometers

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Mouth Care

- To clean your child's teeth and gums, use a gauze pad dipped in plain water or a small amount of mouthwash mixed with water. Wipe the front of teeth only.
- Do not use a toothbrush for 3 weeks.
- Have your child drink water after eating to keep the mouth clean (but do not use a straw).

Food and Eating

- Give your child soft or pureed foods (the same consistency as stage 2 baby foods) **for 3 weeks.**
- Do not give hard foods such as cookies, crackers or chips.
- Use only a spoon for feeding. Nothing else should go into the child's mouth for 3 weeks.
- Do not let your child feed himself.
- Make sure that the food is not too hot.
- Have your child drink water after eating to keep the mouth clean (but do not use a straw).
- Your child may resume bottle feeding after surgery and drink out of sippy cups.
- Pacifiers should not be used after palate surgery.
- Refer to the Helping Hand: *Cleft Palate: Feeding Your Baby*, HH-I-21.

Arm Splints

- Arm splints are used to keep the child from accidentally hurting the inside of his mouth. Use them until your child's checkup.
- Be sure you know how to put the restraints on your child before you go home. The nurse will be glad to show you. (Refer to the Helping Hand: *Arm Restraints*, HH-II-16.)

Activity Or Play

- Your child may play as usual, but needs to be watched more carefully for the next few weeks.
- Do not let other children give the child things to eat or play with unless you are there.
- Soft toys are best for the child to play with while the palate is healing.

Pain

Some pain is normal after going home. Follow your doctor's advice for giving pain medicine.

When to Call the Doctor

Call your child's doctor or the Cleft Lip and Palate Center at (614) 722-5821 if your child has:

- Fever over 101°F.
- Pain that does not go away when you give pain medicine.
- Any injury to the incision or any bleeding in the mouth.
- If your child has trouble eating or will not eat.

Follow-Up Appointment

Call the Cleft Lip and Palate Center at (614) 722-5821 for a follow-up appointment in:

- ❒ 2 weeks_____
- ❒ 3 weeks_____

If you have any questions, be sure to call your doctor or call the hospital operator at (614) 722-2000 and ask for the surgeon on call for your doctor.