

Plastic and Maxillofacial Surgery

Cleft lip repair: post-operative information

Pain control

- Your child may be a little unsettled for 1-3 weeks after a cleft lip repair and require extra attention.
- You should give paracetamol and/or codeine as required for pain relief, usually only for a few days.
- You should avoid aspirin as it may cause bleeding.
- If you are at all concerned about your child's progress, contact the hospital.

Appearance

After cleft lip surgery there will be stitches in your child's lip and nose. The area around the stitches will be pink and slightly swollen. Care for the suture line on the lip and nose as you have been shown by the nurses on the ward. This may involve gentle cleansing with a cotton bud dipped in cooled boiled water and/or application of an ointment to prevent drying out of the wound. Usually the stitches are dissolvable — they will start to dissolve in 7-10 days.

As the scar heals in the weeks after surgery there is often some shortening of the scar so the lip appears 'pulled up'. With time (some months) and gentle massage this will settle. You can start gently massaging the scar once the wound has healed.

Recovery

Two to three weeks are needed before healing is complete. After a cleft lip repair, care must be taken not to bump your child's lip — the area is very fragile.

Diet

Your child can feed using the same method as before surgery. Care should be taken to avoid placing any hard objects such as straws into the mouth.

Dummies

Ask your plastic surgeon about the use of a dummy. Some plastic surgeons ask you to avoid using a dummy for up to a month after the operation, while other surgeons are happy for you to use them straight away.

Arm splints

Your child may need to wear arm splints after surgery to prevent them from putting anything near the lip as it heals. Arm splints are usually required for around 10 days, but sometimes longer, especially if a nasal stent is used. You should make sure you allow your child time without the arm splints several times a day, but please supervise them closely to make sure they don't put anything in their mouth.

Seek medical attention if your child has:

- Increasing pain or pain not relieved by medication.
- Persistent fever.
- General unwellness.
- Wound discharge or crusting and redness of the suture line.
- Persistent poor oral intake.

Follow up

A review appointment should be made to see your surgeon within 1-4 weeks.

Your child should also be seen by the multidisciplinary Cleft Team at Cleft Clinic at around 3 years of age.

If you have any concerns, contact:

Cleft Coordinator

Telephone 9345 6582

Department of Plastic and Maxillofacial Surgery

Telephone 9345 6583

Platypus Ward

Telephone 9345 5433



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