

# Cleft Palate Repair

## Discharge Advice for Parents and Carers

### Going Home

Now your child is going home after their Cleft Palate Repair you may find this information leaflet helpful.

If you have any urgent concerns about your child when you go home please contact the Plastic Surgery Registrar on duty for the cleft team by contacting your hospital switchboard. For routine questions regarding your child's operation please contact your named Cleft Nurse Specialist through the hospitals' switch boards, CHI Temple Street 01 8784200 CHI Crumlin 01 4096100

### Food

After your child's operation they should continue with their specialised bottle. You can begin using a regular bottle, teat or a regular feeder cup 3 weeks after their operation.

Your child should eat a "pureed diet", yoghurt consistency, for 2 weeks after surgery. It is important to continue with a well-balanced diet avoiding sugary foods which may cause tooth decay. A drink of cool boiled water should be given following food to help keep the wound clean.



### Pain Relief/Antibiotics

Pain relief such as ibuprofen (Nurofen) or paracetamol (Calpol) are suitable to use when you go home. Antibiotics are not routinely given after this type of operation. However, some children may require antibiotics. If your child requires antibiotics it is important that the full course is taken.

### Mouth Hygiene

Your child has a wound along their palate with dissolvable stitches. The stitches will dissolve slowly over approximately 3 to 4 weeks and are not harmful if swallowed.

Occasionally the surgeon will use some fat from inside your child's cheeks to help close a gap in their palate. Sometimes extra cuts are made at the sides of the palate to help to bring the skin edges together. Your cleft team will confirm what type of repair your child needed. During this time it is very important for your child to keep their mouth clean to stop the buildup of food debris. A drink of water after each meal and brushing their teeth correctly twice a day is important. A gentle downward brushing motion is best for tooth brushing.

If you are worried that your child's wound has "come apart" please contact a member of the Plastics team within normal working hours 8am - 4pm weekdays. As long as your child is well it is not an emergency and is usually managed by waiting to see how it settles. Small areas of wounds can break down but usually heal on their own. It can be normal to see some threads hanging down inside the mouth during healing and these should be left alone to dissolve themselves.

It can be normal to have some old blood mixed with saliva and mucous in the mouth or nose. Please seek immediate medical advice if you notice any fresh bleeding and contact the Plastic Surgery Team on call. If your child becomes unwell at home with a high temperature and is reluctant to eat or drink please contact the Cleft Team through your hospital switchboard.

### Activities

Most children get back to their normal routine very soon after their operation and should be allowed to play, attend crèche and go outdoors as usual a week or two following surgery. Your child should not suck their finger or thumb or place objects or toys into their mouth for 3 weeks after surgery.

We recommend the use of hand mittens to stop your child picking at their wound especially if they suck their finger or thumb. Hand mittens may be advised for up to 3 weeks after the operation, except when you are bathing or feeding your child, or when they are playing under the supervision of an adult. Your surgeon might ask that soothers or pacifiers be avoided for 3 weeks after surgery. Your cleft team will advise you on mittens and soother use before discharge home.

### Follow Up Appointments

Your child's operation is one of a number of operations that may be needed to help their speech and feeding. It is important that your child continues to be reviewed by the cleft team. This will allow the team to pick up on any problems that may develop and to plan any further operations..

It is important that your baby attends all their appointments. If you are unable to attend your child's appointment please contact your cleft team secretary or administrator/co-ordinator through the hospital switchboards.

#### Jane Gunn

Cleft Nurse Specialist. CHI Temple Street  
Office 01 8921797 01 8784200 Bleep 116

#### Claire Brennan

Cleft Clinical Co-ordinator CHI Temple Street  
087 9888725

#### Caroline Reddy

Cleft Nurse Specialist CHI Crumlin  
01 4096100 Bleep 267

#### Laura Duggan

Cleft Clinical Co-ordinator CHI Crumlin/St James' Hospital  
087 2656897



### Important to Remember

Next Cleft Clinic Appointment \_\_\_\_\_

Next Speech and Language Therapy Appointment \_\_\_\_\_

Authors: Anne McGillivray, Jane Gunn, Caroline Reddy

Version 6      Approval Date: November 2023      Review Date: November 2026

Copyright © Children's Health Ireland - The information in this leaflet is correct at time of print