
What is cleft lip repair?

Your child had surgery to repair their cleft lip. A cleft lip repair restores muscle function and the normal shape of the mouth. You will need to take special steps to keep the sutures (stitches) clean and to keep your child from rubbing the area. Every child's surgery is different. Talk with your child's doctor about specific care for your child. Some guidelines to follow are listed below.

How should I feed my child?

- Keep your child's head upright during feeding and for 20 to 30 minutes after feedings. This is to help them swallow.
- For a baby:
 - You may breastfeed or use the same bottle and nipple used in the hospital to feed them after surgery.
 - Feed them slowly. Burp them after each ounce since a lot of air may be swallowed with the feeding.
- For a child:
 - Give food and drinks from a cup, rubber-tipped syringe or side of a spoon. This includes juices, such as apple, grape or cherry, and milk.
 - It is best to give your child soft, smooth foods, such as applesauce, custard, pudding, ice cream, soups, oatmeal, baby foods and shakes. Talk with the doctor about how long your child should stay on the soft diet. Most often, it will be 2 to 4 weeks.
 - Avoid giving your child any crunchy or chewy foods, such as potato chips, cookies, popcorn, nuts, raisins and hard candy.

How should I care for the wound?

- Gently clean around the wound (suture line) with water every day. Also clean the area after each feeding and if it gets dirty.
- It is OK to bathe your child 48 hours (or 2 days) after surgery. Do not scrub the wound.
- If your child is taking an antibiotic, give it as ordered. Do not stop giving this medicine just because your child feels better.
- It is OK to give your child acetaminophen (Tylenol or less costly store brand). Follow the directions on the box carefully, or ask your child's doctor how much medicine to give.
 - Do not give acetaminophen to babies younger than 3 months of age without a doctor's order.
 - Do not give your child more than 5 doses of acetaminophen in 24 hours.
 - If your child has any type of liver problem, talk with the doctor before giving acetaminophen.
- It is OK to give your child ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil or less costly store brand). Follow the directions on the box carefully, or ask your child's doctor how much medicine to give.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Cleft lip repair, continued

- Do not give ibuprofen to babies younger than 6 months of age without a doctor's order.
- The doctor may order a prescription pain medicine for your child. Follow the doctor's directions to help manage your child's pain.
- If possible, try to keep your child from crying forcefully as it may pull on the sutures (stitches). Hold, comfort and feed your child to help lessen crying.
- Check for signs of redness that do not go away after 15 minutes. Also check for blisters, sores or rashes. Call your child's doctor if you notice any of these.

What else do I need to know?

- Use your child's elbow immobilizers (also called welcome sleeves) for 3 weeks or as advised by the doctor. This is to help keep your child from putting things in their mouth.
 - You may remove the elbow immobilizers while you are watching or holding your child.
 - Remove them at least every 2 hours during the day. This is to check for skin problems.
 - Massage and exercise your child's elbows at these times. Do not let your child's hand or other objects near their mouth.
- Elbow immobilizers may make your child clumsy, so watch for falls. Make sure their shoelaces are tied and pants cuffs are turned up. Avoid toys that could cause your child to fall, such as tricycles or rocking horses.
- The sutures (stitches) will either dissolve or your child's doctor will remove them. Most often, this happens within 7 to 10 days.
- You may notice a small amount of pink or clear, yellow drainage from the wound.
- Take your child to their follow-up visit as advised. Most often, it will be 2 to 3 weeks after surgery.
- It is normal for a surgical scar to seem to get bigger and redder for the first few weeks. This will slowly fade. The scar may never totally disappear.

When should I call the doctor?

Call your child's doctor if:

- The suture line shows signs of infection, such as:
 - Redness
 - Swelling
 - Drainage
 - Bleeding
- Your child has a fever (temperature of 100.4°F or higher).
- Your child will not eat or drink.
- There is an opening in the incision.
- Your child has pain that does not get better from the medicine that the doctor prescribed.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

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