

# After Your Child's Cleft Palate Surgery

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## What can I do to help the swelling?

After surgery, your child's face will swell, especially on the side of the cleft surgery. There might even be swelling around the eye.

The swelling should start to go down after about 3 days. To reduce the swelling, use an ice pack the first 2 days (48 hours) after surgery. Put the ice pack on the upper lip and cheek on the side of the cleft. You can also raise your child's head using 2 pillows during the first 3 to 5 nights after surgery and while your child is napping.

## Will my child be in pain?

Your child will feel pain in both the mouth, where the cleft surgery was done, and the hip, where bone was taken for grafting. The hip is typically more uncomfortable than the cleft site.

You can use ibuprofen (Children's Advil, for example) to relieve your child's pain. Follow the directions on the bottle for how much to give. If ibuprofen does not relieve your child's pain, you may use the pain medicine that we prescribed for your child. **Use the medicine only as directed.**

## Will there be a lot of bleeding?

It is common to have a small amount of bleeding from the mouth or nose. You may also see a small patch of blood on the bandage on your child's hip. This is normal. However, if the bandage fills with blood, please call us.

## What can my child eat and drink?

- Your child may have only clear liquids on the evening after the surgery.
- The day after surgery your child may have other liquids.
- Do not let your child use a straw for 2 weeks after the surgery. This can cause injury or infection.
- Once home, your child may have very soft foods, such as mashed potatoes, that your child does not have to chew.
- Your child should not bite off solid food with the front teeth for at least 3 weeks after surgery.

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## Will the stitches need to be removed?

There will be stitches in your child's mouth at the cleft surgery site to hold the skin together so that it can heal. Some of these stitches will dissolve on their own. But a couple may need to be removed about 10 to 14 days after surgery.

Steri-strips (surgical tape) hold the skin together where bone was taken from your child's hip. The steri-strips will fall off on their own after 2 to 3 weeks.

## Do I need to change the bandage on my child's hip?

The bandage on your child's hip will be taken off at the first clinic visit after surgery. Please keep the bandage dry. If it gets wet, you may remove it. However, do not take off the steri-strips under the bandage, even if they are wet.

## What else should I do to care for my child?

### *Bathing*

The site on your child's hip where the bone was taken should be kept dry for 10 days, whether the bandage is on or not. After 10 days, your child may shower. But your child should not take a tub bath or go swimming for at least 3 weeks after surgery.

### *Cleaning the mouth*

Your child's teeth can be carefully brushed beginning the day after surgery. The toothbrush should touch only the teeth at the cleft site, and not the parts of the mouth where the surgery was done. Also, beginning the day after surgery, your child should rinse gently twice a day with the mouthwash that we prescribed.

## *Medicines*

You have received prescriptions for:

- pain medicine (hydrocodone or acetaminophen). The pain medicine should be taken only as needed.
- antibiotic (usually amoxicillin or clavulanate). The antibiotic must be taken for 7 days. Follow the directions carefully.
- mouthwash (chlorhexidine gluconate). The mouthwash should be used 2 times a day. Have your child gently swish it in his or her mouth and then gently spit it out.

## *Activity*

Your child may walk with help the evening of the surgery. However, your child **should not**:

- use a straw for 2 weeks after surgery
- blow his or her nose for 3 weeks after surgery
- run, jump, rough-house, bicycle, skateboard, play sports, or take gym class at school for 6 weeks after surgery.

## Call us immediately, day or night, at 615-322-2377 if your child:

- has a temperature over 100.4° F (38.5° C)
- has bleeding (more than a small amount)
- feels sick to his or her stomach
- has swelling in the mouth that prevents drinking liquids.

## **Vanderbilt Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery Clinic**

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