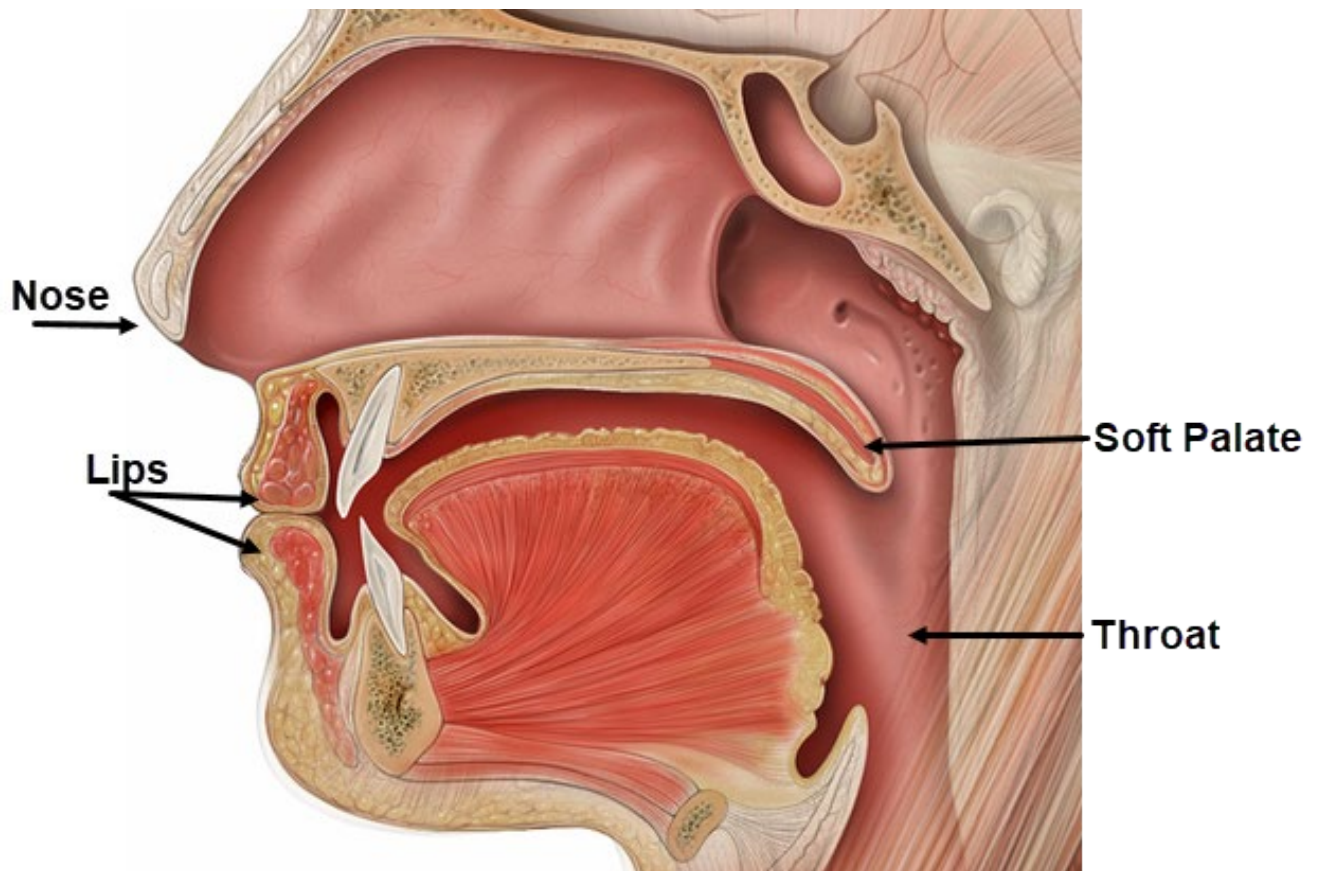


Palatal Lift And Modified Palatal Lift Prostheses

Palatal lift prostheses, or modified palatal lifts, are custom-made devices for the management of palatopharyngeal (velopharyngeal) insufficiency, or VPI.

What is VPI?

During normal speech, the soft palate muscles in the back of the mouth move up and down and touch the back of the throat to produce sound. VPI is a condition where the soft palate does not close tightly against the back of the throat when needed due to impaired movement or inadequate tissue. This lets air come out through the nose and causes speech that is difficult to understand.



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What causes VPI?

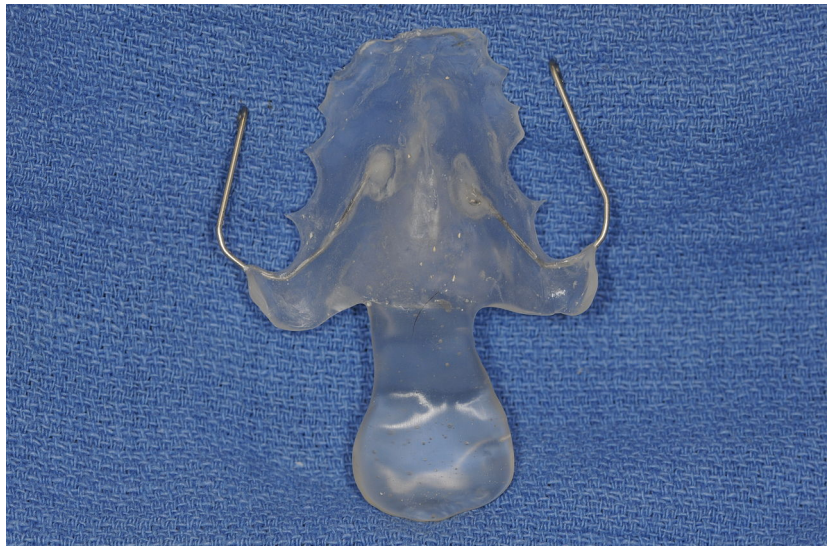
VPI is a condition that may be present at birth (congenital) or may develop later in life. VPI occurs if there is an inadequate amount of tissue structure, as in the case of cleft palate or tumor surgery. It may also occur if an injury to the central nervous system caused incompetence or paralysis of the soft palate.

How is VPI managed?

Surgery can correct or improve the speech in many cases of VPI. If surgical correction is not possible, dentists may custom-make and fit the patient with devices called **palatal lifts** or **modified palatal lifts**. These devices lift and position the soft palate and/or artificially replace lost tissue structure to restore the function of the palate in speech production. Palatal lifts may also improve the ability to control and direct food for proper swallowing.

There are 2 types of palatal lifts:

1. A **transitional device** is made from a model of your teeth and utilizes an all acrylic palatal retainer. Hand adapted wire clasps attach the device to the teeth. The retainer is designed to support and reposition the soft palate. This type of prosthesis is relatively simple to make. It also acts as a diagnostic aid in determining the effectiveness of prosthetic lift therapy.



An example of a transitional palatal lift device. Public Domain via Wikipedia Commons

2. A **definitive prosthesis** is a more permanent device. This device may be utilized if the transitional prosthesis has proven to be effective and you require long-term therapy. You may benefit from a definitive device if you have paralysis of the soft palate or if your palate is non-functional to a significant degree, and these conditions are not expected to improve.

How is a definitive palatal lift device made?

A definitive prosthesis is made like a conventional partial denture, with a cast metal framework that fits the teeth. To ensure proper fit of this permanent device, you may need the placement of crowns or fillings before the device can be made. Because of these possible requirements, the definitive prosthesis is more costly than a transitional prosthesis. The definitive prosthesis is usually prescribed only after your dentist determined that palatal lift therapy is beneficial to you based on your experience with the transitional prosthesis.



Examples of definitive palatal prosthesis. Public Domain via Wikipedia Commons.

What do I need to know about using my palatal lift device?

1. Wear the device as directed during waking, speaking hours.
2. You may wear the device during eating or remove it if you prefer.

3. Remove the device at night. Clean it carefully with a denture toothbrush and denture toothpaste or liquid soap. **Do not** use regular toothpaste which may be too abrasive and damage your device.
4. Store your device in water with denture cleaner overnight or in a dry denture cup with a lid.
5. It is usually necessary to combine palatal lift therapy with regular and intensive speech therapy. The goal of treatment is to restore adequate functions for intelligible speech and swallowing.

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