

Care Instructions After Cleft Lip Repair

What can I expect after my child's cleft lip repair surgery?

- After cleft lip surgery, there will be **sutures** (stitches) in your child's lip. The area around the sutures will be pink and slightly swollen.
 - We often use special tape, called Steri-Strips™, over the lip to reduce tension (pulling) on the repair.
- We will remove your child's stitches about 5-7 days after their surgery. Your surgeon may recommend that your child go back to the OR (operating room) to have their stitches removed under anesthesia. Otherwise, we will remove them in the Pediatric Plastic Surgery clinic.
- To protect the lip repair, your surgeon will have your child wear arm restraints (that we call "no-no's") so they don't rub or pull on the area. Your child will wear these no-no's any time that they are not being closely watched to make sure they don't put anything in their mouth or touch their lip repair. Your child will likely use these for 2 weeks, but it may be longer depending on your surgeon's instructions and how the lip is healing. Your child may seem more irritable (upset) while they're wearing the arm restraints.
 - Try to avoid using pacifiers for at least 2-4 weeks, or until your provider says it's okay. However, if your child is crying hard, it is better to give them a pacifier than to let them continue crying. Intense crying can put strain on the repair site.

How will my child eat and drink after surgery?

- Your child's feedings may be smaller than the normal amount. You may have to do small feedings more often than usual for the first week after surgery.
 - Your child may seem more irritable (upset) if they feel hungry.
- Encourage your child to drink enough liquids so they do not get dehydrated. Keep track of their wet diapers to make sure that they are still peeing and they are not becoming dehydrated.

What pain medications will my child be taking?

- We will prescribe acetaminophen (Tylenol®) and ibuprofen (Motrin®) to help manage your child's pain after surgery. You should give them these medications around-the-clock (except for when they are sleeping) for about 3-5 days after surgery. **Around-the-clock** means that they take them throughout the day on a set schedule. Give them these medications together every 6 hours (for example, you can give your child doses of both Tylenol® and Motrin® at 9:00 AM, 3:00 PM, and 9:00 PM).
- We will also prescribe oxycodone for pain control. You should only use this if their pain is not being controlled by the acetaminophen and ibuprofen.
- How much pain medication your child should take (their **dose**) is based on their weight, so we will tell you how much acetaminophen, ibuprofen, or oxycodone to give them in their discharge instructions.
- Showing your child tender loving care can help them deal with their pain. Cuddle and talk to your child often.

How can I keep the cleft lip repair site clean?

- You should clean the **incision site** (where the stitches are) a few times throughout the day, or as needed, to prevent infection and prevent a crust from forming.

- Use a cotton swab (Q-tip®) and a mixture of half water and half hydrogen peroxide to gently clean around your child's nostrils and Steri-Strips™.
- Gently remove any crusts or scabs that form to make sure everything heals well.
- Leave the Steri-Strips™ on until they fall off, or until we remove them in clinic. If the strips start to lift, you can use clean scissors to trim the peeled edges. If they come off, gently clean the area.
- Make sure that your child keeps their arm restraints on, especially if your child wants to rub the area.
- Put petroleum jelly or Vaseline™ on the lip repair site to prevent hard scabs from forming and to keep the area well-hydrated. You can apply this as many times as needed throughout the day to prevent scabbing and dryness.

When should I call the Pediatric Plastic Surgery clinic?

Before you call the clinic:

- Make sure your child is getting enough liquids. Dehydration can cause their body temperature to rise.
- Check: Is your child getting a cold? Is anyone else at home sick? Their symptoms might be caused by the cold, and not by their cleft lip repair surgery.
- If your child will not eat, try to show them tender loving care. Give them lots of snuggles and try to keep calm. If they still will not eat, please give us a call.

Call the clinic:

- If you notice symptoms of infection, such as:
 - Bright redness around the lip repair site
 - Thick, pus-like drainage (leaking fluid) from the lip repair site

- Fever (a temperature greater than 100.8° F)
- If the incision site looks like it is spreading apart or getting wider.

What is the contact information for the Pediatric Plastic Surgery clinic?

- Between 8:00 AM - 4:30 PM Monday through Friday, call (734) 998-6022 or send us a message through the online patient portal ([MyUofMHealth.org](https://myuofmhealth.org)).
- For urgent issues after 4:30 PM or on weekends, call the hospital at (734) 936-4000. Ask the operator to page the on-call pediatric plastic surgeon.

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