

Care Instructions After Cleft Palate Repair

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

- After cleft palate surgery, there will be white dissolvable **sutures** (stitches) on the roof of your child's mouth. These sutures may dissolve after a few days, but they may also take several weeks to go away completely.
- Your child may have some red drainage (leaking fluid) from their nose or mouth for the first few days up to about 10 days after surgery.
- To protect the area and prevent your child from putting their fingers or toys in their mouth, your surgeon will have your child wear arm restraints (that we call "no-no's"). 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 completely. If you must use one to calm your child, please try to remove it as soon as possible.

How will my child eat and drink after surgery?

- Your child will be on a very soft diet of blended food for 3-4 weeks.
- 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.

- Please feed your child with a spoon, and do not put it all the way into their mouth. You should only put the spoon just past their lips.
- Encourage your child to drink enough liquids so they do not get dehydrated. We recommend that they use a regular cup without a top, or a very soft, short-spouted sippy cup. Keep track of their wet diapers to make sure that they are still peeing and 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.

When should I call the 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 palate 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. Encourage them to eat foods like ice cream and milkshakes. If they still will not eat, please give us a call.

Call the clinic:

- If you notice symptoms of infection, such as:
 - Bright redness at the palate repair site
 - Thick, pus-like drainage (leaking fluid) from the palate repair site
 - Fever (a temperature greater than 100.8° F)
- If the repair 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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