

Cleft Lip Repair Post-Operative Instructions

What can I expect after surgery?

- After anesthesia, your child may react in different ways. They may cry, be fussy or confused, feel sick to their stomach, or vomit. These reactions are normal and will go away as the anesthesia wears off.
- Your child will stay in the hospital until they are drinking well, urinating normally, and pain is controlled.
- Your child will have set of padded arm restraints called “no-no’s” placed on their arms to prevent them from bending at the elbow. These will need to stay in place for about 2 weeks as the surgical scar heals. It is important to give your child a rest from the no-no’s. Just make sure they are supervised, so they are not putting their hands in their mouth.
- You may notice some swelling around your child’s mouth, lips and eyes, as well as some dried blood or oozing where the cleft lip was repaired. The swelling may look worse on the day after the surgery but it will go down over the next weeks.
- You may see stitches on the outside of the skin. These will eventually dissolve.
- Your child may have clear plastic tubes inserted in both sides of the nose (nasal conformers) to help reshape the nose during healing. We will remove them at your child’s 2-week appointment.

How do I take care of my child’s incision?

- After surgery your child will have steri-strips on their lip. Keep the steri-strips in place until your 1 week visit with us. At this time we will put on new ones and your child must wear them for the next 3 weeks. You may trim the edges if they start to curl.

- It usually takes about 4 weeks for the incision to heal. The incision will leave a pink or red scar. You can expect the scar to feel hard and tight at first. The scar should fade and become softer and flatter in the months and years after surgery.

Are there diet restrictions after surgery?

- If you breastfeed your child, you may breastfeed them right away.
- If your child is bottle-fed, they may resume taking the bottle right away.
 - Continue using the bottle that your child was using before surgery.

Are there activity restrictions after surgery?

- Allow your child to slowly become more active. Have them rest as much as needed.
- Put your child to sleep on their back. This will prevent them from rubbing their lip on a blanket or the crib mattress.
- Do not use a pacifier or let your child put a hand, toys, or other objects in their mouth.
 - When you are not able to continuously watch your child, they should be wearing their “no-no’s” to prevent them from putting things in their mouth.

How do I manage my child’s pain after surgery?

- We will order a pain reliever such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen for pain.
- Your child may experience nasal and sinus congestion. You may use a saline nasal spray to help with nasal congestion and crusting.

What follow-up care will I receive?

- Your child will have a post-operative checkup about one week after surgery, and again at 2, 4, and 6 weeks after surgery.

- Bring any questions you have to this appointment. If you are unable to keep the appointment, please be sure to call and reschedule.

When should I call my doctor?

Call your doctor as soon as possible if:

- You notice severe or increased pain not relieved by medication.
- Your child has a temperature over 100.8 degrees.
- Your child is bleeding from the nose or mouth.
- Foul smelling drainage is coming from the scar or nose
- Your child is not taking enough oral fluids or there is a decrease in wet diapers.
- You may notice a change in your child's bowel habits right after surgery. This is common. If your child has not had a bowel movement after a couple of days, call us.
- You notice your child having any other symptoms.

What is the contact information for the clinic?

- M-F, 8:00am-5:00pm call: Pediatric Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery clinic at (734) 232-6975.
- After 5:00pm or on the weekends if you have urgent issues call the hospital at (734) 936-4000 and ask the operator to page the “On-call pediatric oral surgeon.”

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