

About your child's cleft palate surgery

This leaflet explains about your child's cleft palate surgery. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

Before your child's operation

Why does my child need a cleft palate repair?

Your child is having this operation to repair their palate. We usually carry out the operation between 9-12 months of age. However, there are some children that need to wait until they are a little older.

What should I do to prepare for my child's operation?

To reduce the chance of your child becoming unwell and the operation being cancelled, please minimise contact with other children and avoid busy public places for 2 weeks before and after surgery. In addition, please avoid contact with anyone who is unwell. We advise that your child does not have any routine immunisations for 2 weeks before and 2 weeks after the operation.

What happens before the operation?

Your child will attend pre-admission clinic (virtually or face-to-face) to make sure they are ready for surgery. An appointment may be made with an anaesthetist if needed. A member of the cleft nurse team will contact you to let you know the time your child will need to stop drinking and eating before their operation.

What happens on the day of surgery?

You will usually be asked to come into Evelina London at a time between 7.30-11.30am on the day of the operation, depending on your child's place on the theatre list. You will meet your child's surgeon and anaesthetist before the operation. You will be able to go with your child into the anaesthetic room and stay with them until they fall asleep. Your child will generally be away from you for around 3-5 hours including anaesthetic time.

Are there any risks?

Risks of surgery and anaesthetic will be discussed with you when you sign the consent form. There is a small risk of infection after the operation, and your child will be given antibiotics during the operation to reduce this risk. No routine antibiotics will be given to take home. Every anaesthetic carries a risk of complication. However, this is very small and is reduced further by making sure that your child is well at the time of surgery. If your child is unwell then your child's surgery may be postponed until they are better.

Please contact a member of the cleft nurse team if your child is unwell in the 2 week period before surgery.

After the surgery there is a small risk of bleeding. You may notice blood stained mucous or saliva coming from your child's nose or mouth, and this is common in the first few days after the operation but should settle. If you see bright red bleeding that does not stop within 10 minutes please attend your nearest Emergency Department (A&E).

After your child's operation

When can I see my child after the operation?

As soon as your child wakes up from the operation and their condition is stable you will be taken to the recovery unit by a member of the ward nursing team to see them.

How will my child feed after the operation?

Your child can feed straight away orally. If your child feeds from a bottle/cup please bring it to the recovery unit with you. If breastfeeding you can put your child to the breast. If your child is bottle fed please be aware that they might find it uncomfortable to drink from the bottle at first, so you may want to offer a cup as an alternative. We suggest you take some soft food with a clean spoon (see suggested food list at the end of this leaflet).

Will my child be in pain after the operation?

The local anaesthetic given to your child during the operation will make their palate feel numb for a few hours after the operation but will wear off overnight. Your child will need a morphine drip during and after the operation. This is usually stopped the morning after surgery. Your child will also be given regular paracetamol and ibuprofen while in hospital and to take home.

How long will my child need to stay in hospital?

You can usually expect to stay 1-2 nights in hospital after your child's operation.

When can I take my child home?

The morning after your child's operation they will be reviewed by a member of the cleft team. To be discharged, your child will need to be eating and drinking around half of their normal intake and their observations need to be within normal limits for their age.

Your child will need to have not needed morphine for 6 hours and their pain should be managed with paracetamol and ibuprofen.

How do I care for my child's palate after the operation?

Encourage your child to drink plenty of water after any milk/food to keep the stitches clean. Discourage your child from putting their fingers and thumb in their mouth. You may want to try dressing your baby in a baby grow with attached mittens, or try putting a small pair of socks on the hands. We recommend removing any hard toys your child may put in their mouth.

When should I start brushing my child's teeth after the operation?

Keeping up good oral hygiene after surgery is very important. We recommend you start brushing your child's teeth again by the next day, twice a day (fluoride strength 1450ppm). You may want to use a softer toothbrush.

How will I manage my child's pain after the operation?

We recommend giving your child paracetamol and ibuprofen regularly, as prescribed for 4-5 days after the operation. It is important to give these medicines regularly to help to reduce pain. After 4-5 days try to give pain relief less often and only as needed, aiming to stop the medicines about a week after surgery.

Paracetamol: 1 dose every **4 to 6 hours** (maximum of 4 doses in 24 hours)

Ibuprofen: 1 dose every **6 to 8 hours** (maximum of 4 doses in 24 hours)

Suggested schedule:

On waking/breakfast (e.g. 6am)	Paracetamol and ibuprofen
10am	Paracetamol
12 midday	Ibuprofen
2pm	Paracetamol
6pm	Ibuprofen
Before bed (e.g. 8pm)	Paracetamol
In middle of night, if needed	Ibuprofen

Check with nursing staff what time the last doses were given on the ward, so you know when you can give it when you get home. You may also like to keep a diary of when you have given doses.

How will I know if my child has an infection after the operation?

Your child may develop a temperature, you may notice smelly/offensive breath or you may notice your child is not behaving like their usual self. Contact your GP or out-of-hours urgent care service if you are worried. If you do look in your child's mouth and are concerned about what you see please contact the nursing team.

When will I be seen after the operation?

The cleft nurse team will offer support and if this is your child's first palate operation they will arrange a post-operative review the week following the operation. At this review your nurse will discuss your child's recovery and examine their palate. You will receive an appointment to see your cleft surgeon in clinic 6-8 weeks after the operation.

Eating and drinking after surgery

Do not give any hard, sharp, chewy or crunchy foods for at least 2 weeks after your child's operation. This includes pizza/chips/potato waffles/toast/crisps/biscuits/anything with pips or seeds. Please give soft/mashed foods during this period. Do not give bread/cake/pastries as these can get caught in your child's stitches and are best avoided. We've made suggestions of suitable foods below:

Breakfast

Porridge, yoghurt, milkshakes, cereal softened/soaked in milk, fromage frais, fruit/vegetable purees, smoothies (no pips), fruit pouches, scrambled eggs/tofu, pancakes, omelettes/poached eggs, mashed avocado, mashed banana/mango, stewed fruit.

Lunch and dinner

Smooth soups, soft/well cooked pasta, noodles, tinned spaghetti, mashed potato/sweet potato with grated cheese (added butter to increase calories), cauliflower cheese, cottage cheese, grated cheese, soft cheese triangles/cheese spread, soft cooked/mashed vegetables (broccoli, cauliflower, carrot, courgette), fish pie, flaked fish, tender minced meat (shepherd's pie/cottage pie), dahl, lentil stews/soups, steamed tofu, baked beans, guacamole, houmous, taramasalata, custard/egg custard, jelly, mousse.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact a member of our team:

Rebecca Bailey – Kent	07768 474876
Helen Daniel – Surrey	07717 571931
Joanna Leigh – Kent	07810 483923
Jackie Matthews – Sussex	07970 261781
Ruth Mirza – Surrey	07717 864003
Sally Moran – London	07768 474667
Beverley Willshire – London	07976 292232

Contact any of the above numbers to talk to the team. Cleft nurse specialists are available between 9am-5pm. Please note there is a nursing service provided 7 days a week. Phones are diverted to the nurse on-call at weekends and bank holidays. Text messages are not diverted, so please call if you need advice.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [w: www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets)

Evelina London Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's medicines, please speak to the staff caring for them or contact our helpline.

t: 020 7188 3003, Monday to Friday, 10am-5pm **e:** letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and Accessible Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch.

t: 020 7188 8815 **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111 **w:** 111.nhs.uk

NHS website

Online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing.

w: www.nhs.uk

Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, please get in touch.

t: 0800 731 0319 **e:** members@gstt.nhs.uk **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership

Was this leaflet useful?

We want to make sure the information you receive is helpful to you. If you have any comments about this leaflet, we would be happy to hear from you, fill in our simple online form, **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets, or **e:** patientinformationteam@gstt.nhs.uk

Leaflet number: 5026/VER1

Date published: August 2020

Review date: August 2023

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A list of sources is available on request