

Presurgical orthopaedics for your baby's cleft lip and palate

The aim of this information sheet is to help answer some of the questions you may have about the treatment your baby needs to prepare for surgery on their facial cleft. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to your baby's cleft orthodontist or cleft nurse specialist.

Your baby has been given either one or both of the following:

- mouth plate
- lip taping.

This leaflet explains why your baby needs a mouth plate and/or lip taping and what you need to know about looking after your baby while they wear it.

Mouth plate

Why does my baby need a mouth plate?

The mouth plate helps to keep and improve the shape of the upper jaw before surgery.

What is a mouth plate?

A mouth plate is like an orthodontic removable brace or retainer. It is a thin plastic covering that will be made for your baby and will fit over your baby's gums in their mouth.

How should my baby use the plate?

Your baby will need to wear the plate all the time. It may take three to four days for your baby to get used to it and you may gradually increase the number of hours they wear it in the first days. During this time you should supervise them while they wear it. **It is especially important not to leave your baby unsupervised for extended periods of time.** A denture fixative, such as Poligrip®, may help to stop the plate moving too much in your baby's mouth. Your cleft orthodontist will either recommend or supply or you with this.

How should I feed my baby while they are wearing the plate?

You should continue to feed your baby in the usual way advised by your cleft nurse specialist. The plate may slow down feeding at the start, but in time this will improve.

Will my baby sound different?

The plate alters the shape of the mouth so your baby's crying and other noises may sound slightly different.

How should I clean the plate?

Clean the plate in the morning, in the evening and after your baby vomits.

- Brush it with liquid soap in warm water. Very hot water will damage and distort it. To do this, fill the sink with water and hold the plate over it, so if you drop the plate it won't get damaged in the sink. Be gentle when cleaning the plate to avoid any damage.
- You may choose to use a 'denture sterilising tablet' to produce a liquid in which you can soak the plate. Make sure it is a product suitable for use with both metal and plastic.
- Scrub the plate gently with a toothbrush or small brush on both surfaces and rinse with clear water. Do not use toothpaste, as it contains ingredients that may irritate the inner nose skin lining of a baby with a cleft whose palate is yet to be surgically repaired.

What should I do if my baby is uncomfortable or gets an ulcer?

Remove the plate if your baby seems uncomfortable or if you notice an ulcer in the mouth.

It is important that you contact your cleft orthodontist to arrange another appointment as soon as possible. Your cleft nurse specialist can also give advice.

If you remove the plate because of discomfort or ulcers, put it back in your baby's mouth for half a day right before your appointment. We can then spot any sore areas and accurately adjust the plate.

Lip taping

Why does my baby need lip taping?

Lip taping gently changes the position of your baby's lip before surgery, which will help the surgeons with the lip repair.

What is lip taping?

The lip taping consists of three main parts (which are explained in further detail below):

- second skin dressing
- tape
- elastics.

Second skin dressing

This is an adhesive dressing material, for example DuoDERM[®], which acts like a second skin. You can apply this over a small area of the cheeks to protect your baby's skin from the tape. It will stay in place for up to a week. If it becomes loose or starts to look dirty during the week, replace it, but don't change it too regularly as this will also irritate your baby's skin.

Tape

Your cleft orthodontist will give you this and show you how to use it. Stick the tape on to the second skin on the cheeks and make sure it is always in place.

Elastics

Your cleft orthodontist will give you the elastics. The tape and the elastics help to change the position of your baby's lip before the operation. Check the elastics are always square or rectangular in shape to make sure they are working properly.

How should I use the lip taping for my baby?

Please use the lip tape as advised by your cleft orthodontist. You should try to ensure that your baby wears it all the time.

How do I feed my baby when they are wearing the lip tape?

You should continue to feed your baby in the way advised by your cleft nurse specialist.

How often should I change the lip tape?

If the lip tape slips or the elastics become round in shape, reposition the tape and make sure they remain in the correct position over your baby's lip. You may need to make many small adjustments during the day to make sure the tension is always correct and until your baby gets used to wearing the lip tape.

It may help to have spare tapes made up ready for use. You can stick them on a plastic surface and peel them off when you need them. The packet that the second skin dressing comes in is ideal for this.

What should I do if my baby is uncomfortable or gets skin irritation or ulcers on their face?

Skin irritation can sometimes occur under the second skin. Please contact your cleft nurse specialist if this happens so we can give you a different dressing or medication.

If the tape causes irritation or ulcers on the skin underneath your child's nose, please stop using it and contact your cleft orthodontist to arrange an appointment as soon as possible.

What happens once my baby's plate and/or lip tape is fitted?

Your baby will have follow-up appointments with the cleft orthodontist. The cleft orthodontist will adjust the plate and/or lip tape regularly before your child's surgery.

Your cleft nurse specialist will keep in touch by phoning or visiting you, and you can contact them with any concerns about the plate or taping.

What should I do if I'm worried about the plate or lip tape or if I have a problem at home?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your child's plate or lip tape, please do not hesitate to contact your cleft orthodontist or speak to your cleft nurse specialist.

What happens after my baby's surgery?

Often your baby will not need the lip tape and plate after their lip correction operation, as the shape of their mouth will have changed. However in some cases the plate may still be needed. Your cleft orthodontist or surgeon will discuss this with you.

Where can I get more information?

You can get more information by either contacting your cleft orthodontist or cleft nurse specialist or asking a member of the cleft team at any outpatient appointment.

If you have any questions or concerns about a mouth plate or lip tape, please contact your baby's cleft orthodontist or cleft nurse specialist using the contact details in the **Contact us** box below.

Contact us

South Thames Cleft Service

Floor 12, Tower Wing, Guy's Hospital, Great Maze Pond, London, SE1 9RT

t: 020 7188 1321 **e:** cleftservices@gstt.nhs.uk

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **w:** 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

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

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