

# Presurgical orthopaedics for your baby's cleft lip and palate

**This information will answer some of your questions about the treatment your baby needs to prepare for surgery on their facial cleft. If you have any questions, please speak to your baby's cleft orthodontist or cleft nurse specialist.**

Your baby has been given 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

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

### How to use the plate

Your baby will need to wear the plate all the time. It might take 3 to 4 days for your baby to get used to it. You can slowly 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 important not to leave your baby unsupervised for extended periods of time.** A denture fixative, such as Poligrip®, might 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 to feed your 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 might slow down feeding at first, but in time this will improve.

### Your baby's sounds

The plate changes the shape of the mouth, so your baby's crying and other noises might sound slightly different.

## How to clean the plate

Clean the plate in the morning, in the evening, and after your baby is sick (vomits).

- Very hot water will damage and distort it. Brush it with liquid soap in warm water. To do this, fill the sink with water and hold the plate over it, so if you drop the plate it will not get damaged in the sink. Be gentle when cleaning the plate to avoid any damage.
- You can use a denture sterilising tablet to produce a liquid to 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 can irritate the inner nose skin lining of a baby whose palate has not been repaired.

## What to do if your baby is uncomfortable or gets an ulcer

Remove the plate if your baby seems uncomfortable or if you notice an ulcer in their 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 see any sore areas and accurately adjust the plate.

## Lip taping

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

- second skin dressing
- tape
- elastics

## Why your baby needs lip taping

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

## Second skin dressing

This is an adhesive dressing material, for example DuoDERM<sup>®</sup>, 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, you can replace it. Do not change it too often as this will also irritate your baby's skin.

## Tape

Your cleft orthodontist will give you this tape 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 to use the lip taping for your baby

Use the lip tape as advised by your cleft orthodontist. You should try to make sure that your baby wears it all the time.

## How to feed your 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 to 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 might 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 tape.

It might 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 to do if your baby is uncomfortable or gets skin irritation or ulcers on their face?

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

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

## Once the plate and/or lip tape are fitted

Your baby will have follow-up appointments with the cleft orthodontist. They will adjust the plate 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.

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## Who to contact

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's plate or lip tape, contact your cleft orthodontist or speak to your cleft nurse specialist.

## After your 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. In some cases, the plate might still be needed. Your cleft orthodontist or surgeon will discuss this with you.

### Contact us

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. Evelina London Cleft Service, St Thomas' Hospital, South Wing, First Floor, Block C, [phone](tel:02071881321) 020 7188 1321

[email](mailto:cleftservices@gstt.nhs.uk) cleftservices@gstt.nhs.uk

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

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