

Your child's secondary speech surgery

This leaflet is about your child's secondary speech surgery. It is also known as pharyngoplasty, cleft palate re-repair, or buccinator flap surgery. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to a doctor or a member of the cleft nursing team.

About your child's surgery

Why does my child need secondary speech surgery?

Your child is having this surgery because their soft palate is not closing off against the back wall of the throat, and this is affecting their speech.

Before your child's surgery

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

To reduce the chance of your child becoming unwell and the surgery being cancelled, avoid busy public places and anyone who is unwell. We advise that your child does not have any routine immunisations in the 2 weeks before and after surgery.

If your child is unwell in the 2 weeks before your surgery date, please contact a member of the cleft nursing team.

What happens before my child's surgery?

We need to see your child at a pre-admission clinic appointment to make sure they are ready for surgery. This may take place face to face or online. You might also have an appointment with an anaesthetist.

A member of the cleft nurse team will contact you in the week before surgery. They will check that your child is fit and well for surgery. We also explain when your child will need to stop eating and drinking (fast) before their surgery. For full details about fasting, see our leaflet about **Your child's general anaesthetic**. Ask us for a copy if you do not have one.

What do I need to bring?

Please see the list of items below that may be useful for you to bring to hospital:

- favourite juices or water bottle
- favourite smoothies or yoghurts
- some soft snacks
- towel and wipes
- soft toothbrush and toiletries
- pyjamas
- things to keep your child entertained such as games, phone or tablet
- favourite toys or blanket
- overnight bag for person staying including sleepwear and toiletries, and a sweater. During summer the ward can be hot, so lighter clothes may be useful.

There is a kitchen on the ward, with access to a fridge and microwave. Please feel free to bring in meals and snacks for yourselves, labelled with your name on. There are cafés and restaurants within the hospital grounds and around the area.

On the day of your child's surgery

What happens on the day of surgery?

You will usually be asked to come into Evelina London Children's Hospital at 7:30am or 11:30am on the day of the surgery, depending on your child's place on the theatre list.

A member of the ward nursing team will prepare your child for surgery, and check their blood pressure, pulse and temperature (there are known as observations). A member of the surgical and anaesthetic team will also meet with you before the surgery. We confirm that you have given your permission (consent) for the procedure. You can ask us any questions that you may have.

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 about 3 to 5 hours.

Are there any risks?

As with all procedures there are some risks. We talk to you about these risks when you sign the consent form.

There is a small risk of infection after the surgery. Your child will be given antibiotics during the surgery to reduce this risk. No routine antibiotics will be given to taken 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.

If your child is unwell in the 2 weeks before surgery, please contact a member of the cleft nursing team.

After surgery there is a small risk of bleeding. You may notice blood stained mucous or saliva coming from your child's nose or mouth. This is common in the first few days after the surgery but should settle.

If you see bright red bleeding that does not stop within 10 minutes, please go to your nearest emergency department (A&E).

After your child's surgery

When can I see my child after the surgery?

As soon as your child wakes up from the surgery and their condition is stable you will be taken to the recovery unit to see them.

How will my child feed after the surgery?

Your child can feed straight away orally (by mouth). You can give your child some soft food (see end of leaflet for suggestions) with a clean spoon. Your child will need to have a soft diet for the 2 weeks after surgery. Encourage your child to drink water after all food or milk to keep the wound clean.

Will my child be in pain after the surgery?

The local anaesthetic given to your child during the surgery will make their palate feel numb for a few hours, but will wear off overnight. Your child will have a morphine drip during and after the surgery. 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 in hospital for up to 2 nights after your child's surgery.

Only 1 parent can stay at the bedside overnight. Please refer to Paediatric ward visiting times for other visitors.

When can my child go home?

The morning after your child's surgery they will be reviewed by a member of the cleft team. To be discharged, your child will need to be eating and drinking about half of their normal intake, and their observations need to be within normal limits for their age. Your child will need to have not required morphine for 6 hours, and their pain should be well managed with paracetamol and ibuprofen.

After you go home

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

Encourage your child to drink plenty of water after any milk, food, or juice. This helps to keep the stitches clean, and keeps them hydrated, which helps with their recovery. Discourage your child from putting their fingers or thumb in their mouth after their surgery and once they get home. We recommend removing any hard toys your child may put in their mouth. The stitches will dissolve over the coming weeks.

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

Maintaining good oral hygiene after surgery is very important. We recommend you start brushing your child's teeth again by the next day, 2 times a day. Use a toothpaste that contains 1450ppm of fluoride. You may want to use a softer toothbrush.

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

We recommend giving your child paracetamol and ibuprofen regularly, as prescribed, for 4 to 5 days after the surgery. It is important to give these medicines regularly to help to reduce pain.

After 4 to 5 days, if you feel their pain is being well managed, and they seem comfortable when eating and drinking, try to give pain relief less often. Aim to only give only one of the medicines (either paracetamol or ibuprofen) throughout the day, and eventually stop the medicines about a week after surgery. If you have any questions about pain relief, please contact a member of the cleft nursing team.

You can give your child:

- Paracetamol: 1 recommended dose every **4 to 6 hours** as instructed
- Ibuprofen: 1 recommended dose every **6 to 8 hours** as instructed

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 and when the next dose is due.

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

Symptoms of an infection include:

- a high temperature (fever)
- smelly or bad breath
- redness or oozing at the wound
- changes in your child's behaviour

If your child has any of these symptoms, contact your GP or out-of-hours urgent care service, or go to your nearest emergency department (A&E).

If you do look in your child's mouth and are concerned about what you see, please contact the nursing team for advice.

When will I be seen after the surgery?

The cleft nurse will call you a week after the surgery to discuss your child's recovery and wound healing.

You will receive an appointment to see your cleft surgeon in clinic 6 to 8 weeks after surgery. During this appointment you will have an assessment with the speech and language therapist to check on your child's speech. At this point, you may not have noticed any changes in your child's speech but this is not unusual at this stage. A plan can then be made if more speech and language therapy is needed.

Your child may be reviewed again after 6 or 12 months to monitor their speech progress. They may come back for a follow up speech X-ray 12 months after surgery.

Is there anything else I need to know?

We advise that your child does not go back to school or their childcare setting for at least 2 weeks.

Any contact sport and swimming should be avoided for 6 weeks.

There may be specific advice depending on the surgery your child has had, you will be given this information by a member of the cleft surgical team.

You will be given a discharge letter when your child leaves hospital which you can show to your child's school or childcare setting if needed.

Eating and drinking after surgery

Do not give any hard, sharp, chewy, crunchy or sticky foods for at least 2 weeks after your child's surgery. This includes pizza, chips, potato waffles, toast, crisps, biscuits and anything with pips or seeds.

Please only give soft, mashed foods during this period. Do not give bread, cake, or pastries, as these can get caught in your child's stitches, so should be avoided.

Examples of foods that are suitable after surgery

Breakfast

- porridge
- yoghurt
- milkshakes
- cereal that is softened or soaked in milk
- fromage frais,
- fruit or vegetable purees,
- smoothies (no pips)
- fruit pouches
- scrambled eggs or tofu
- omelettes or poached eggs
- mashed avocado
- mashed banana or mango
- stewed fruit
- steamed vegetables

Lunch and dinner

- smooth soups
- soft pasta (well cooked), noodles
- tinned spaghetti
- mashed potato or sweet potato with grated cheese (with extra butter to increase calories)
- cauliflower cheese
- cottage cheese
- grated cheese
- soft cheese triangles
- cheese spread
- fish pie
- cooked vegetables that are soft or mashed (broccoli, cauliflower, carrot, courgette)
- flaked fish
- tender minced meat (shepherd's pie, cottage pie)
- dahl, lentil stews or soups
- steamed tofu
- hummus
- custard or egg custard
- jelly
- mousse

Make sure your child is drinking water during and after meals to help with wound healing, oral hygiene and keeping the palate and wound site clean.

Contact us

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

Kent – Rebecca Bailey, [phone](#) 07768 474876, or Joanna Leigh, [phone](#) 07810 483923

Sussex – Jackie Matthews, [phone](#) 07970 261781

Surrey – Ruth Mirza, [phone](#) 07717 864003, or Caroline Williams, [phone](#) 07768 474667

London – Izzy Williams, [phone](#) 07717 571931, or

Beverley Willshire, [phone](#) 07976 292232

Cleft nurse specialists are available from 9am to 5pm, 7 days a week. **Text messages are not diverted**, so please call if you need advice.

Please call 111 or go to your nearest emergency department (A&E) if you have any concerns after leaving hospital.

Gassiot House Accommodation Office

If you need to arrange accommodation or have any questions regarding your hospital accommodation booking please contact the office directly

[phone](#) 020 7188 0276 [email](#) gstt.stthomasaccommodation@nhs.net



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