



Family Education Sheet



Home Care Instructions for Patients with a Dentofacial Orthopedic Appliance

This sheet gives you information about caring for your child after insertion of a dentofacial orthopedic appliance. The appliance is placed in your child's mouth under general anesthesia. The appliance is held in position by several pins that go into the bone of the jaw. The appliance is used to realign the alveolar (gum) segments, which will improve the outcome of the cleft lip operation and later dental function.

Nutrition

- Your child may return to his or her usual diet at home using a special nipple for cleft/lip palate such as a Haberman feeder or Ross nipple. When feeding your child, press the nipple firmly on your child's tongue to avoid having the nipple touch the appliance. A syringe can also be used.
- Expect your child to eat less at each feeding during the first week. Feed your child **more frequently** since they will take less each feeding.
- Using the nipple or a small syringe, rinse your child's mouth with a teaspoon (5ml) of water after each feeding.
- Your baby is getting enough fluid if he or she has at least several wet diapers a day.

Pain

- Your child will have some discomfort for several days. The swelling in your child's mouth should begin to decrease after 72 hours. He or she may be unusually irritable (fussy) and may need to be held more often than usual. He/she may not eat as much as usual.
- To help the pain give your child acetaminophen (also known as Tylenol®). Acetaminophen comes as a tablet, caplet, and liquid. It is used to relieve mild to moderate pain and to reduce fever. It is very important to take acetaminophen exactly as directed by your doctor. Follow the directions on the package and ask your doctor or pharmacist to explain any part you do not understand. Do not take more or less of it than prescribed by your doctor. Do not take it any more often than prescribed by your doctor.
- If the pain does not go away with the acetaminophen you may give your child Tylenol® with codeine. Your child's doctor will need to give you a prescription. It is very important to take medications exactly as directed by your doctor. Follow the directions on the package or on your prescription label carefully, and ask your doctor or pharmacist to explain any part you do not understand. Do not take more or less of it than prescribed by your doctor.
- You can medicate the baby before feedings if necessary.
- Give your child a dose of pain medicine before bedtime, especially for the first 3 days at home. This will help your child to sleep better.
- Your child's tongue may become sensitive because it is frequently touching the appliance in the mouth. Rubbing Orajel® (numbing gel for teething babies) on the sore area of the tongue may help. Do not rub Orajel® on bleeding areas of the tongue.

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- After 5 to 7 days, your child will adjust to the appliance and will be more comfortable.

Caring for the Appliance

- The area around the appliance will need to be cleaned after each feeding. Using a bulb syringe, gently suction milk curd and mucous from around the appliance.
- There is a screw in the appliance. When the screw is turned, it will gradually realign the alveolar (gum) segments. Your child's doctor will show you how to turn the screw and tell you when to turn the screw.
- Gently rinse off the appliance with clear liquid that you pulled up in a syringe. Turn infant's head to side or lean him/her forward to prevent choking.

Follow-up Appointments

- Make an appointment for your child to see the doctor 1 week after the appliance was placed.
- Then, your child will need to see the doctor every 2 weeks until the cleft lip repair and the appliance removal.

When to Call Your Child's Doctor or Nurse

Call if your child

- has a fever of 100.5° F degrees or higher (taken under the arm);
- has pain that won't go away after receiving pain medicine;
- is not drinking liquids or is vomiting;
- is irritable and cannot be comforted; or
- has sores or bleeding on the tongue.

A **Spanish** version of this is available from your provider

Send comments or questions to: **Familyed**@childrens.harvard.edu
