



Family Education Sheet



Home Care Instructions after a Cleft Lip Repair (for Dr. Mulliken's Patients)

This sheet gives information on caring for your child after he or she has had cleft lip repair.

Nutrition

- Give your child his or her usual diet at home. Feed your child with a special cleft lip nipple (Haberman feeder). Your child's nurse will show you how to use this.
- **Avoid pressure on the lip stitches with the nipple or feeder.**
- If you are breastfeeding, your child may breastfeed one week after the surgery. The "football hold" may be most comfortable for the baby.
- You can use a soft-tip spoon after the sutures are removed.
- If your child has a palate retainer in place, rinse his or her mouth with tap water after each feeding. Use the cleft lip nipple or feeder to do this.
- Sometimes your child's nose may get stuffy. This will make it difficult for your child to eat. Clear the nose with normal saline nose drops. You can buy normal saline nose drops in any drug store. If the nose drops don't clear your child's nose, use a nasal aspirator or bulb syringe. This must be done very gently. (See "[*Using a Bulb Suction Aspirator with Your Baby.*](#)")
- If your child also has a cleft palate, begin to offer fluids at age 6 months using a sippy cup. Your baby should be drinking only from a cup by age 8 to 9 months. Your child cannot use a bottle or pacifier after a cleft palate repair. See Family Information Sheet: [*Preparing your Child for a Cleft Palate Repair*](#) for more information.

Activity

- For 6 weeks, dress your child in the special terry cloth and Velcro® sleeves you received. Using long-sleeved clothing will help hold the sleeves in place.
- Remove the sleeves several times a day to exercise your child's arms. Take off only one sleeve off at a time, so that your child will not be able to touch the lip.
- Your child will go home with a metal loop, called a Logan bow, over the lip. It is taped to the cheeks. This is used to protect the lip from injury. **Do not remove the Logan bow.** If the tape becomes loose, add more tape to hold the Logan bow in place.
- If your child also had a dental device removed, your child's doctor or nurse will discuss care of the new retainer with you. Call your child's doctor if the retainer falls out or is loose.
- Do not give your child a pacifier.

Pain

- Your child may have some mild discomfort at home. If your infant is irritable and not feeding well, he or she may be in pain. Give acetaminophen (Tylenol®), as directed by your child's doctor. 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 your child has more than mild discomfort, the doctor may prescribe medicine to help ease the pain. Give pain medicine as prescribed and instructed by your doctor and nurse.
- Try to schedule a dose of pain medicine around bedtime, especially for the first few days at home. This will help your child sleep better.

Constipation

- Keep track of your child's bowel habits. He or she should return to previous bowel habits. If not, he or she may be constipated.
- Call your child's doctor or nurse if you think your child is constipated.

Skin Care

Clean your child's lip every 4 to 6 hours and as needed. **It is important to prevent any crusting.** The best time is just after feedings.

Follow these steps:

1. Using your fingers, gently wash your child's lip with Ivory® soap and water.
2. Rinse well and pat dry.
3. Apply a very thin layer of antibiotic ointment (bacitracin) to the lip using a Q-tip®. Stop using the antibiotic on the third day after the operation.
4. You should gently clean nostrils with a wet Q-tip® several times a day by rotating the Q-tip® gently *inside* the nose area until clean. Use a flashlight to help you see inside the nose.
5. If crusting occurs, clean the area with ½ strength hydrogen peroxide (with a Q-tip®) followed by a water rinse.

Follow-up

Your child will have the lip stitches taken out in the operating room by his or her doctor in the next few days.

When to Call Your Child's Doctor or Nurse

Call if your child:

- has redness, increased swelling, or drainage or bleeding from the lip incision;
- has separation of or pimples on the suture line;
- has a fever higher than 100.5°F degrees (taken under the arm);
- has pain that doesn't get better after pain medicine is given;
- is not drinking liquids or vomits; or
- has trouble breathing.

Call if you have any questions or concerns.

Suture Removal Instructions for Dr. Mulliken's Cleft Lip Patients

Dr. Mulliken removes sutures (stitches) 4 or 5 days after the operation. Children are given light general anesthesia by mask before suture removal. General anesthesia is medicine that brings on a deep sleep so your child doesn't move or feel anything.

- Children who will be receiving anesthesia must not eat or drink anything for a certain amount of time before a procedure. On the day before the appointment, a nurse from the Day Surgery Unit (DSU) will call you to give instructions for your child. The nurse will tell you when to stop giving your child food, fluids, and clear liquids. Clear liquids include water, apple juice, white grape juice, breast milk (not formula) and Pedialyte®.
- Go to the Admitting Office on Main 1 on the day of the suture removal. From there, you will be directed to the DSU or Pre-op area. Both are on Main 3.
- A nurse will prepare you and your child for the suture removal. You will be asked to wait in the waiting room while the sutures are removed.
- After the sutures are removed, your child will be observed in the Post Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU) until the anesthesia medicine begins to wear off. Nurses will watch your child until he or she is awake and drinking liquids again. This usually takes about 1 hour. You may stay with your child in the PACU.
- The nurse will let you know when your child is ready to go home. The nurse will give you instructions on caring for your child.
- Your child will have a new Logan bow over the lip. Keep the Logan bow on your child's face until the tape holding it in place peels off. This should happen in 7 to 10 days.
- Continue to dress your child in the Velcro® and terry cloth sleeves for five weeks. The sleeves should be removed at least 4 times a day to exercise the arms.
- When the sleeves are off, be sure to make sure your child does not touch the suture line.
- Your child will have special tape called a Steri-Strip® over the lip. When the Steri-Strip® starts to peel and loosen, remove it gently after wetting it with soap and water. Use a mild baby soap or Ivory®. After cleaning, replace the Steri-Strip® with a new one using the special adhesive you were given. Continue to do this for 6 weeks. Leave the Steri-Strip® off for 24 hours if there is any sign of redness or there is a pimple.
- Dr. Mulliken will tell you when to return for a follow-up appointment.
- If you have any questions, call Dr. Mulliken's office at (617) 355-7686.

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

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