

Preparing for your baby's lip surgery

Anticipating your baby's upcoming surgery can be very stressful for parents. You may find that you have a lot of questions about what will happen before and after surgery. The following is some information to help in planning for the surgery.

What happens before surgery?

When you visit the plastic surgeon, be sure to ask any specific questions about the surgery. Also ask what your baby may look like immediately after surgery.

The plastic surgeon's office will give you an appointment for a pre-operative visit at McMaster Children's Hospital several days before the surgery. Bring your baby to the Same Day Surgery Unit on the 2nd floor near the yellow elevators. This appointment will last up to 3 hours.

During the pre-operative visit:

- Your baby will see several people including a nurse and an anesthetist. Please ask them any questions you have about the surgery, the anesthesia or the hospital stay.
- You will be given a checklist to follow the day before surgery. The instructions include when your baby should stop eating and drinking before surgery. It is important to follow these rules.

Please continue with the lip taping until the time of the surgery.

What happens on the day of surgery?

On the day of the surgery bring your baby to the Same Day Surgery Unit to register him or her. A member of the surgical team will meet you there. If your baby is ill, the surgery may be cancelled. The hospital may cancel surgery if there is a shortage of beds available that day. This does not happen very often, but it is a possibility.

A volunteer will go with you and your child to the Holding Area of the Operating Room. A member of the operating room team will then bring your baby to the operating room. While your baby is in the operating room, please wait in the surgery waiting lounge.

Your baby will be given a general anesthetic so that he or she will be asleep during the surgery and not feel any pain. After the surgery is completed your baby will be monitored in the Post Anesthetic Care Unit (PACU) for at least an hour.

The nurses in PACU will place armbands on your baby. The armbands will restrict the movement of your baby's arms so he or she is not able to touch or tug at the repaired area and the stitches. As soon as possible, the nurse will bring you to the PACU to be with your baby. When your baby is ready to leave the PACU, a nurse will take you and your baby to one of the children's wards.

What happens after surgery?

The ward nurses will continue to care for your baby during his or her recovery.

Do not allow your baby to suck on fingers or put objects into his or her mouth. Your baby should not use a pacifier (soother) for 2 weeks after the surgery.

Your baby may be fussy or cranky for a few days after returning home from the hospital. He or she may have problems eating or sleeping. This is normal and should end within a week or two.

After surgery, the amount and type of pain is different for each baby. Your baby will be given pain medication so he or she will feel more comfortable. The plastic surgeon will give you a prescription for pain medication to use at home. To learn other ways to make your baby comfortable, ask your nurse for the information sheet called **Learning about relieving your child's pain**.

It is important to keep the armbands on 24 hours a day for about 10 to 14 days. You may take the armbands off for short periods of time to give your baby a bath or to exercise his or her arms. It may be hard to keep the armbands on but the repair must be protected so it can heal properly. When you are done with the armbands, please return them to the Cleft Lip and Palate Team or Dr. Strumas.

What can my baby eat and drink?

You will be able to feed your baby right away. Breastmilk or formula will be given through a syringe. The syringe will be used for 24 to 48 hours after surgery. After 48 hours you may begin using a bottle very carefully. Hold the bottle for your baby and try not to put pressure on the incision.

How do I care for the incision?

You will see a line of stitches on the lip. It will also look swollen. There may be a small amount of bleeding from the stitch line (incision) and the nose.

While your baby is in the hospital, the nurse will show you how to clean the stitches with sterile water and apply antibiotic ointment (Polysporin®). This should be done 4 to 5 times a day. Cleaning will help prevent crusting and infections. Continue this care for the incision at home for one week. The stitches will dissolve and do not need to be removed.

If the cleft extends into the nose, you may see a small red rubber bolster in your baby's nostril. You should try to clean around this the same as you do the lip.

The bolster is held in place by a stitch through the bolster on top of the nose.. The plastic surgeon will remove it when you return to his office. If the bolster becomes dislodged, try to reposition it. If it is no longer attached, you can remove it.

When can my baby go home?

Your baby will need to stay in the hospital for about 2 days. The surgeon will decide when your baby can go home. Before going home, your baby should be drinking well, have a normal temperature (no fever), have pain well-managed with medication, and generally be in good health.

When does my baby need to see the surgeon?

Make an appointment to see the Plastic Surgeon 10 to 14 days after surgery. During this visit, the plastic surgeon will tell you if it is okay to remove the armbands. The surgeon will also teach you how to massage the scar once it is fully healed. This is most helpful during the first 3 months after surgery, but can help up to a year after surgery.

When should I call the surgeon?

Call your baby's surgeon if:

- Your baby injures the repaired area
- The area around the stitches is red or swollen
- There is bleeding or discharge from the stitches
- Your baby feels ill or has a fever – a temperature higher than 38.9°C or 102°F for more than 24 hours
- Your baby is not getting enough to drink. Signs may include: a dry mouth, no tears, not passing urine regularly or urine that is too dark.
- You have any concerns about your baby

Dr. Strumas: 905-521-2100, ext. 73594

- If you cannot reach the surgeon, call your family doctor.
- If you are not able to reach either doctor, bring your baby to the emergency room at McMaster Children's Hospital.
- If you are not in the Hamilton area, go to your nearest hospital emergency room.

**For more information please call:
Sue Eastwood, Coordinator
Cleft Lip and Palate Team
905-521-2100, ext. 77069**

Please return the armbands to the Cleft Lip and Palate Team at the Ron Joyce Children's Health Centre or give them to Dr. Strumas.