

Cleft Service - Glossary

ALVEOLAR RIDGE – The bony ridge or ‘gum line’ of the maxilla (upper) jaw containing the teeth

ARTICULATION – The process of forming speech sounds.

AUDIOGRAM – A record of hearing levels or sensitivity.

AUDIOLOGIST – A person with a degree, license, and certification in Audiology (science of hearing) who measures hearing, identifies hearing loss, and participates in rehabilitation of hearing impairment.

COLUMELLA – The central, lower portion of the nose which divides the nostrils into right and left.

COMMUNICATION DISORDER – An interference with a person’s ability to comprehend others or express themselves (usually in verbal form).

COMPREHENSION – Knowledge or understanding of spoken or written language.

CONGENITAL – A disease, deformity, or deficiency existing at the time of birth.

CRANIOFACIAL ANOMALY – A visible, structural and/or functional difference affecting the head (cranium) and/or face.

CROSSBITE – A dental condition where the teeth cross rather than meet when biting.

DENTAL ARCH – The curved shape formed by the teeth in their normal position.

EARDRUM – Tympanic membrane which vibrates and transmits sound to the middle ear.

E.N.T. – The abbreviation for ear, nose, and throat, also known as ORL.

EUSTACHIAN TUBE – The air duct which connects the nasopharynx (back of the throat) with the middle ear; usually closed at one end, opens with yawning and swallowing; allows ventilation of the middle ear cavity and equalization of pressure on two sides of the eardrum.

EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE – Communication of one’s ideas, desires, or intentions to others, usually through speech.

FISTULA – An abnormal opening.

GENETICS – The science of heredity (how things pass from one generation to the next).

HARD PALATE – The front part of the roof of the mouth containing bone covered by mucosa (skin of the mouth)

HEARING IMPAIRMENT – A loss in hearing which may range from mild loss to complete deafness.

HEREDITY – The total of the physical characteristics, abilities, and potentialities genetically derived from one’s ancestors.

HYPERNASALITY – Greater than normal nasal resonance or vocal tone heard during speech (escape of sound or noise through the nose).

HYPONASALITY – Denasality. A lack of normal nasal resonance during speech.

LANGUAGE DISORDER or IMPAIRMENT – Inability to communicate normally and effectively due to problems with comprehension or expression of language.

MALOCCLUSION – A deviation from normal occlusion, that is, incorrect positioning of the upper teeth in relation to the lower teeth.

MANDIBLE – The lower jaw.

MAXILLA – The upper jaw.

MIDDLE EAR – The portion of the ear behind the eardrum. It contains three small bones which transfer sound from the eardrum to the inner ear.

MYRINGOTOMY – A minor surgical procedure in which a small slit is made in the eardrum to allow fluid to drain from the middle ear.

NASAL EMISSION or NASAL ESCAPE – An abnormal flow of air through the nose during speech. Usually indicative of an incomplete seal between oral and nasal cavities.

NASAL SEPTUM – The “wall” that divides the nose into right and left halves. It normally joins the roof of the hard palate like an “inverted T”.

NASOPHARYNGOSCOPE – A lighted telescopic instrument used for examining the passages in the back of the throat. Useful in assessing velopharyngeal function.

OCCLUSION – Relationship between upper and lower teeth when they are in contact. Refers to the alignment of teeth as well as relationship of dental arches.

ORAL CAVITY – The mouth bounded by the teeth in front and the soft palate at the back.

ORAL-MAXILLOFACIAL SURGERY – The specialty of dentistry concerned with management of dental and skeletal deformities.

OROFACIAL – Relating to the mouth and face.

ORTHODONTICS – The specialty of dentistry concerned with the correction and prevention of irregularities and malocclusion of the teeth and jaws.

OTITIS MEDIA – Inflammation of the middle ear with accumulation of thick, mucous-like fluid.

OTOLARYNGOLOGIST – An “ear, nose and throat” physician specializing in the diagnosis and management of head and neck disorders.

PALATAL INSUFFICIENCY – A lack or shortness of tissue that prevents the soft palate from contacting the back of the throat (pharynx).

PALATE – The roof of the mouth including the front portion, or hard palate, and the back portion, or soft palate (also called the velum).

PEDIATRICIAN – A physician specializing in treatment of children.

PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY – The specialty of dentistry concerned with the care of children’s teeth.

PHILTRAL COLUMNS – Normal ridges in the skin of the central upper lip connecting the peaks of the Cupid’s bow to the back of the nose.

PREMAXILLA – The small bone in the upper jaw which contains the upper four front teeth. Normally connected with the side segments of the upper jaw (maxilla) but separated in some clefts.

PROLABIUM – The central area of the upper lip beneath the centre of the nose (columella) and between the philtral columns.

PROSTHESIS – An artificial substitute for a missing body part.

PROSTHETIC SPEECH AID – A removable plastic appliance which provides a structural means of achieving velopharyngeal closure (separating the nose from the mouth).

PROSTHODONTIST – A dentist who specializes in providing prosthetic appliances for oral structures.

PSYCHOLOGIST – An individual with the necessary academic training and experience to be licensed to practice psychology as a profession.

RADIOGRAPHY – Photographic film or plate depicting images of internal body parts. X-ray.

RESONANCE – Vocal quality associated with the vibration of air in the oral and nasal cavities.

SOFT PALATE – The back part of the roof of the mouth containing muscles and mucosa (pink “skin”). The Latin name for the soft palate is velum.

SPEECH-LANGUAGE THERAPIST – An individual with the necessary academic training and experience to diagnose and treat disorders of speech, language, and communication.

SPEECH ASSESSMENT - An evaluation which provides information about how speech sounds are formed.

SPEECH DEFECT – Deviation of speech from the range of normal.

SPEECH VIDEOFLUOROSCOPY – A recorded x-ray examination of the speech mechanism during function, focusing on the soft palate (velum) and walls of the throat (pharynx). Useful in assessing velopharyngeal function.

UVULA – Small, cone-shaped muscular process hanging at the back of the soft palate.

VELOPHARYNGEAL CLOSURE – The closing of the nasal cavity from the oral cavity which directs air used in speech through the mouth rather than the nose. It requires interaction of the muscles in the palate and the back of the throat.

VELOPHARYNGEAL INCOMPETENCE/ INADEQUACY/INSUFFICIENCY (VPI) – Inability to achieve adequate velopharyngeal closure

VELUM – The Latin name for the soft palate.

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