

CARE OF THE CLEFT LIP CHILD – INFORMATION FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH CLEFT LIP

REPAIR OF CLEFT LIP

SURGERY

Surgery for cleft lip may involve surgery to the lip, nose and primary palate (the hard portion of the roof of the mouth behind the teeth).

Our aim is to repair the cleft lip at 4-5 months of age, although timing of repairs may differ from child to child.

The operation and after surgery care is at Kidz First Surgical Care Unit, Middlemore Hospital.

ADMISSION

You will be notified of a surgery date by the Plastics Booking Clerk. Admission to Kidz First Surgical Care will usually be on the day prior to surgery.

It is important for children's safety that before surgery there is a time when they do not have anything to eat or drink including water (NIL BY MOUTH). The nurses will let you know what time your child will have their last feed/drink before their surgery. It is important that your child is woken for this feed. The time will depend on when your child will have surgery.

Time of surgery on the day will depend on the age of your child and the other children on the surgical list for that day. Usually the youngest child on the surgery list goes first.

Your stay in hospital will be about 2-4 days. Once baby is comfortable and eating and drinking well, you should be able to go home. If you have any questions or concerns, please ring the Cleft Service Co-ordinator: 021 574 434.

ARM SPLINTS

Arm splints need to be worn for 3 weeks after surgery. These are to prevent baby putting objects such as fingers and toys into their mouth and injuring the surgical site. These will be given to you in the ward before surgery and can be returned at your follow-up clinic appointment.

A follow up appointment will be made, for approximately 6 weeks after surgery, when you are discharged from the hospital.

EATING AND DRINKING AFTER SURGERY

Most babies are able to continue to breastfeed after cleft lip surgery or you may continue to use the feeding method that you have discussed with your speech therapist unless changed by the surgeon at the time of surgery. Your surgeon will be able to discuss this with you at the time of surgery.

If your child is having solids, they need to be very soft and smooth with no lumps. Adding their milk to solids makes it sloppy and is a good way of giving extra fluid to your child. Do not give your child toast, crackers or any other hard food for about 3 weeks post surgery to prevent damage to the surgical site.

ONGOING TREATMENT

Your child will be regularly seen in the Cleft clinic and assessed by our team of specialists. Ongoing cleft appointments are yearly and as your child gets older – every 2 years.

Because each child is different, it is not possible to predict exactly what surgery will be necessary in the future. Along the way, as a child grows and develops, cleft related problems may arise that need reviewing by a member of our cleft team. If you have any concerns and wish to see one of our specialists or the cleft team earlier please contact the Cleft Service Co-ordinator who will arrange the appointment.

For further information contact the:

- Cleft Service Co-ordinator: 021 574 434
- Cleft support Group www.cleft.org.nz or 0800 425 338
- Or refer to the Blue Book supplied by the Cleft Service Coordinator or Support Group.

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