

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

REPAIR OF THE CLEFT PALATE

SURGERY

Surgery for cleft palate involves surgery to the palate or roof of the mouth (the hard and/or soft portion).

Our aim is to repair the cleft palate at 10-12 months of age, although timing of the 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.

EATING AND DRINKING AFTER SURGERY

For 3 weeks after surgery, food needs to be very soft and sloppy. Adding their milk to solids makes it sloppy and is a good way of giving extra fluid to your child. Some children prefer sloppy solids to fluid after surgery. Small regular meals are best. It is important to continue to give your child drinks often to make sure get enough fluids. It is a good idea to give your child a drink of water after eating to rinse their mouth.

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. There are some great food ideas on the Cleft support group website: www.cleft.org.nz

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 are given to you in the ward before surgery and can be returned at your follow up clinic appointment.

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

ONGOING TREATMENT

Your child will be regularly seen in the Cleft clinic and assessed by our team of specialists. Ongoing cleft appointments are on a yearly basis 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 the 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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