

PREPARATION FOR DISCHARGE

CARE OF THE CHILD WHO HAS SURGERY FOR REPAIR OF CLEFT LIP/PALATE

Going home can be an eagerly awaited moment, but can also be a time of anxiety. Here are some points to help guide you as you prepare to go home.

Settling into a routine at home again will take you some time. Your child will still be getting used to their new mouth, routines will be disrupted, and their feeding may have changed a little.

Make sure you have a support network that you can call on when you need to take a break.

CLEFT LIP SURGERY

Your nurse and surgeon will guide you on the ways to manage the surgical site. Steristrips may be on the lip after surgery. These can be changed if they become loose. Steristrips help keep the surgical site intact. Please ask the nurses on the ward to show you how to do this before you go home. Drinks of water after food will also help keep the suture line clean.

Some swelling and bruising is present for a few days, but will eventually fade away. It is normal for the scar to be red and raised for several months. As the scar matures it may tighten. This may change how the lip looks but this will settle over time. The scar will gradually become soft and pale. Once healed, remember to protect the scar from the sun with the use of sun block.

ALL CLEFT LIP AND PALATE SURGERY

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 speech language therapist should have provided you with the appropriate feeding device prior to surgery. If you have any problems please contact your speech language therapist or the Cleft Co-ordinator.

It is important that your child has meals that are 'soft smooth' i.e. free of lumps for 3 weeks post surgery. This is to avoid damaging the surgical site. Due to the swelling and discomfort, some infants prefer to have their food very sloppy and this is a good way to get fluid into their diet, as they may be reluctant to drink initially. Remember not to give your child hard sharp food such as toast, biscuits or crackers.

If your child is breast feeding, remember to ask your Surgeon about when your child can resume breast feeding. Sips of water after food and milk can help keep the surgical site clean.

Strolls in the pram are a good way of keeping your child content. If carrying your child, face them away from your shoulder as they may bump their lip/mouth.

Continue giving your child regular pain relief as prescribed by your doctor if they become unsettled. The amount of pain relief required will decrease over the next few days. If you have concerns, see your GP.

Arm splints need to be in place for 3 weeks post surgery. It is important that your child is unable to put anything into their mouths that may damage the lip or palate repair. Remove splints for bathing and to exercise their arms and shoulders.

Remember that you and your baby have gone through a large event. You need to give yourself time to recover. Take any offers of help and look after yourself as well as your baby.

If baby is unsettled, go through your normal check list. Are they:

- Hungry?
- Tired?
- In pain?
- Frustrated?
- A mixture of all of the above?

Remember to trust your gut feelings. If you are in doubt, contact your GP. Treat your baby just like any other.

A follow up clinic appointment will be at 6-8 weeks post surgery. If you have not received a clinic appointment please contact the Cleft service coordinator.

PLEASE RETURN YOUR ARM SPLINTS WHEN YOU ATTEND THIS CLINIC.

If you have any questions or concerns, please talk to the nurses at Kidz First or contact Megan Sanders, Cleft co-ordinator, Plastics Dept 021 574 434 or 09 276 0044 ext 8922.

If you would like someone to talk to, ring the Support Group on 0800 4 CLEFT. They are all parents of cleft children so they have similar experiences and can offer support.

Document Name	Preparation for discharge.doc	Version:	1.0 May 2009
Document Owner:	CMDHB Cleft Co-ordinator	Next Review Date:	May 2011
Counties Manukau District Health Board			