

Cleft Care: Following a cleft lip repair +/- primary rhinoplasty

What is a cleft lip repair?

A cleft lip repair is an operation to close the gap in your baby's lip. The surgeon brings the lip muscles together and reshapes the lip. This helps with:

- feeding
- facial movement and expression
- appearance as your baby grows.



Sometimes the nose is also gently reshaped during the same operation. This is called a primary rhinoplasty.

Recovery

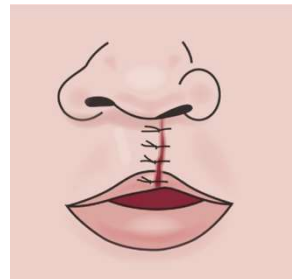
It can take 2 to 3 weeks for your baby's lip to heal.

During this time, feeding and sleep patterns may feel different. This is common after a hospital stay and usually improves over time. Your baby may need extra comfort and reassurance while they heal.

Arm splints

Your baby will wear arm splints for 1 week to protect the stitches:

- keep splints on unless told otherwise
- you may remove them while closely supervising your baby
- check the skin for red marks or pressure areas.



Cleaning the lip

- Gently clean the stitch line with the normal saline provided
- Apply a thin layer of emollient 4 times a day
- Remove old ointment before applying more



Nasal stent

A nasal stent helps shape the nostril and support healing:

- use saline drops to keep it clean
- if it falls out, it can be gently replaced (you will be shown how).

If you are concerned, you can contact the cleft nurse. This is usually not urgent, and the team will guide you on what to do next.

Feeding

Most babies can return to their usual feeding (breast or bottle), unless advised otherwise:

- smaller, more frequent feeds may help
- feeding may be slower while swelling settles.

If you are worried about feeding or notice fewer wet nappies, contact your GP or the cleft team.

Pain relief

Your baby may be unsettled in the first few days:

- you can give paracetamol as directed
- regular doses for the first 24 - 48 hours can help keep your baby comfortable.

Signs of infection

Please watch for:

- temperature over 38°C
- increasing swelling or redness
- bleeding from the wound
- increased fluid (ooze)
- a strong or unusual smell.

If you notice any of these, contact the cleft nurse on 08 6456 4380 or PCH.PlasticsCNS@health.wa.gov.au during office hours. If your baby is unwell or you are concerned, see your GP or go to your nearest emergency department.

Follow up

Your baby will be seen one week after surgery:

- For Mr Gillett's patients: Plastics Dressing Clinic for review of dissolving sutures.
- For Mr Vijayasekaran's patients: Day procedure for stitch removal under general anaesthetic.

You will receive an appointment to see the surgeon at around 3 months after surgery.

If you have any questions or concerns, contact Plastics Administration during office hours on 08 6456 4380 and your call will be directed to the appropriate person to assist you.



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Child and Adolescent Health Service



Child and Adolescent Health Service

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