

Cleft Care: Following alveolar bone graft

What is an alveolar bone graft?

An alveolar bone graft is an operation to repair the gap in the gum (alveolus) where the teeth grow. Bone is usually taken from the hip and placed into the gum. This helps to:

- support adult teeth as they come through
- strengthen the upper jaw
- improve the shape of the gum and nose area.

Recovery

Healing usually takes a few weeks. The first days at home are important for your child's comfort and for protecting the surgical areas in the mouth and hip.

Your child should rest and take part in quiet activities until reviewed.

Mouth care

Good mouth care supports healing and helps prevent infection. A nurse will show you how to care for your child's mouth before you leave hospital:

- continue the mouth care routine started in hospital
- rinse with cooled, boiled water after food, drinks, and medications
- Use chlorhexidine mouthwash twice a day for 10 days (or until advised by the dental team)
- start gentle tooth brushing with a small, soft toothbrush after 48 hours.

Diet

For the first 2 weeks, your child will need smooth, pureed food. Food should be lump-free and easy to swallow.

Examples include:

- pureed meats and vegetables
- strained soups
- soft cereals (Weet-Bix, porridge)
- mashed banana, avocado, or potato
- pureed fruit
- yoghurt, custard, milkshakes.

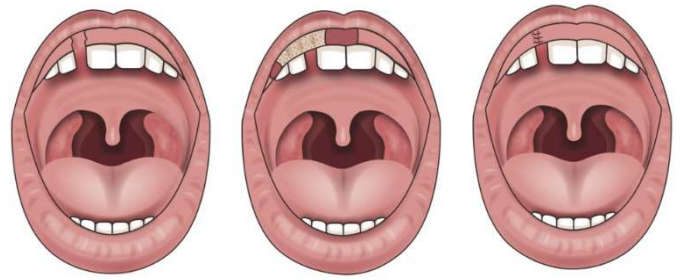
After 2 weeks, your child can move to a soft diet. This includes foods that are easy to chew, such as:

- minced meat, flaked fish, scrambled eggs
- soft pasta, rice, and well-cooked vegetables



- soft cereals with milk
- yoghurt, soft cheese, smoothies.

Encourage drinking from an open cup. Avoid using straws, as suction can affect healing.



Activity and rest

Encourage quiet activities and gentle walking until your follow-up appointment:

- no school until you have been reviewed
- no sport or rough play for 2 months to protect the graft and hip site.

Hip care

Bone is taken from the hip during surgery, so this area also needs care.

- keep the dressing clean and dry
- shower only (do not soak the dressing)
- gently pat dry after showering
- watch for redness, swelling, or discharge.

Pain relief

If your child is uncomfortable, you can give paracetamol as directed on the packaging.

Signs of infection

Please watch for:

- temperature over 38°C
- increasing swelling or redness
- bleeding from the mouth
- 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 appointments

You will receive an appointment 10 days after surgery for a dental and hip review. You will also 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



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