

Cleft Care: Following pharyngoplasty

What is a pharyngoplasty?

A pharyngoplasty is a surgery to help improve how the soft palate works during speech. Some children have difficulty closing the gap between the mouth and nose when they talk. This can cause speech to sound nasal or unclear.

This surgery helps reduce that gap, so air can be directed out through the mouth more easily during speech. This supports clearer speech over time.

Recovery

It can take at least 2 weeks for your child to heal after surgery. During this time, your child should rest and take part in quiet activities. It is best to stay home from school for about 1 week.

It is common for your child's speech to sound better at first because of swelling. As the swelling settles, their speech may change. It can take several months to understand how the surgery has supported speech. The Speech Pathology team will follow up after surgery to monitor progress.

Mouth care

Looking after your child's mouth is important to support healing and prevent infection.

- Rinse the mouth with cooled, boiled water after food, drinks, and medications.
- You may be advised to use salt water or chlorhexidine mouthwash twice a day.
- Brush teeth with a small, soft toothbrush, taking care to avoid the roof of the mouth.

Diet

To protect the surgical area, your child will need smooth, pureed food for 3 weeks. Use a round spoon when eating and open cups for drinking. Do not use forks, straws, or any hard or sharp objects in the mouth.

Pureed food should be smooth, lump-free, and not require chewing. Examples include:

- pureed meats and vegetables
- strained soups
- smooth porridge or well-mashed Weet-Bix
- well-mashed banana, avocado, or potato
- pureed fruit
- lump-free yoghurt, milkshakes, and custard.



Pain relief

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

Signs of infection

Please watch for the following signs:

- temperature over 38°C
- increasing swelling or redness around the mouth
- bleeding from the mouth
- increased fluid (ooze) from the wound
- 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 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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