

# Cleft Lip Repair

## *Post-Operative Patient Instructions*

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### **Feeding**

Your child's lip is repaired with dissolving stitches covered with glue (Dermabond), but the repair is delicate for several weeks after surgery.

- Give your child his or her usual diet at home.
- Avoid pressure on the lip stitches with the nipple or feeder.
- If you are breastfeeding, your child may breastfeed the *evening* of the operation. You can also use a soft tip spoon, sippy cup or bottle. **Try to avoid giving your child a pacifier, if possible, as it may place undue pressure on stitches.**

Sometimes your child's nose may get stuffy, especially if a rubber nasal stent was placed into his/her nose. Clear the nose with **saline nose drops**. You can buy saline nose drops in any drug store. If the nose drops don't clear your child's nose, use a nasal aspirator or bulb syringe. This must be done very gently.

### **Activity**

At the end of the surgery special Velcro sleeves may have been placed on your child's arms to prevent your child from picking at the lip. These are **completely optional** and were placed for your convenience. You may use them as you see fit. Some parents place them at night when they are not watching their child to prevent injury.

- If used, remove the sleeves several times a day to exercise your child's arms. Take off one sleeve off at a time, so that your child will not be able to touch the lip.

Your child's doctor will tell you when your child can return to daycare or school.

## **Pain**

Your child may have some mild discomfort at home. If your infant is irritable and not feeding well, he or she may be in pain. Give **acetaminophen (Tylenol)**, as directed by your child's doctor. Acetaminophen comes as a tablet, caplet, and liquid. It is used to relieve mild to moderate pain and to reduce fever. It is very important to take acetaminophen exactly as directed by your doctor. Follow the directions on the package and ask your doctor or pharmacist to explain any part you do not understand. Do not take more or less of it than prescribed by your doctor. Do not take it any more often than prescribed by your doctor.

- If your child has more than mild discomfort, the doctor may prescribe medicine to help ease the pain. Give pain medicine as prescribed and instructed by your doctor and nurse.
- Try to schedule a dose of pain medicine around bedtime, especially for the first few days at home. This will help your child sleep better.

## **Constipation**

Keep track of your child's bowel habits. He or she should return to previous bowel habits. If not, he or she may be constipated. This is common when using prescription pain medications, which should therefore be limited after surgery. On the other hand,

**Acetaminophen (Tylenol)** does not cause constipation.

Call your child's doctor or nurse if you think your child is constipated.

## **Skin and Wound Care**

The incision is protected by a thin layer of glue known as Dermabond. Do not attempt to wash or remove the Dermabond — it will fall off on its own and all the sutures will dissolve. No additional care of the incision is needed. Do not apply petroleum products such as Vaseline or antibiotic ointment over the Dermabond® as these products will break down the glue.

The nose and lower edge of the lip may be gently cleaned if there is crusting. You may clean with a wet cotton swab (Q-Tip) and water. You may loosen any crusts in the nose with saline nose drops.

The nose is supported by a soft silicone nasal stent, which is sutured in place for 2 weeks. Please do not attempt to remove the silicone stent – it will be removed by the doctor or

nurse practitioner in clinic. The holes in the nostril stents should be irrigated twice each day with a small amount of saline or salt water to keep the passages open. You may buy saline drops at the drug store.

Once the silicone nasal stent has been removed, you are encouraged to continue using the stent for a total of 6 months. The stents may be held in place with steri-strips provided your doctor.

You can bathe your child in the tub. The lip can get wet, but do not wash the area.

## **Follow-up**

### **When to Call Your Child's Doctor or Nurse**

Call if your child:

- has trouble breathing.
- has redness, increased swelling, drainage, or bleeding from the lip incision;
- has separation of the suture line;
- has a fever higher than 101.5°F degrees (taken under the arm);
- has pain that doesn't get better after pain medicine is given;
- is not drinking liquids or vomits;

Please make a clinic appointment two weeks after surgery.

If you have any questions or concerns, call your child's surgeon at **401-444-2299**.