

CLEFT LIP & PALATE TREATMENT TIMELINE

This is a timeline for treatment of the child with a cleft lip and cleft palate. This is a generalized plan of treatment. Each child is individually evaluated and a care plan is then formulated for that child's treatment.

1 MONTH

This is your first visit to see the Plastic Surgeon. Your baby will be weighed to be sure he/she is gaining weight appropriately. A history will be taken as well as picture. The Plastic Surgeon will discuss with you the best treatment plan for your baby. If it is necessary, you may be referred to a Pediatric Dentist. Impressions are made by the dentist of the infant's gumline so that a dentomaxillary appliance can be made. This will be done in the dentist's office.

1½ - 2 MONTHS

The dentomaxillary appliance is inserted in the baby's mouth. This requires general anesthesia done by the dentist in surgery. The baby will stay 23 hour – overnight in the hospital for observation.

2½ - 3½ MONTHS

The **cleft lip is repaired** at this time. If an appliance was inserted, it may be removed in the dentist's office prior to surgery or it may be removed in surgery the same time the cleft lip is repaired. If the nose is also repaired at this time, your surgeon may feel it is necessary for your baby to receive nasal stents. Your baby will come back to visit the surgeon in clinic about 1-2 weeks after the surgery.

6 MONTHS

This is the time to introduce your baby to a cup. The baby needs to be drinking from a cup (without a lid or with a very shallow spout) by the time the palate is scheduled to be repaired. The surgery requires suturing of the soft tissue of the palate (**palatoplasty**) and it is important that this area not be irritated by the placing of items in the mouth. The baby will **NOT** be allowed to have a pacifier at this time. They will need to wear arm restraints to keep them from putting anything in their mouths.

9 MONTHS

The cleft palate is repaired. Your baby need to have ventilation tubes placed in his ears at the time of the lip repair. This will be determined by the ENT surgeon.

If your baby has a bilateral cleft lip (both sides of the lip are involved) a second stage of this repair may be done. The baby will stay 1-2 nights in the hospital to be sure the baby is taking fluids adequately.

3 YEARS – 4 YEARS

When your child begins to speak in sentences, a speech evaluation by a speech pathologist is recommended. Speech therapy and/or surgery may be recommended at this time.

If surgery for speech is recommended, a **pharyngeal flap** will be done by the Plastic Surgeon. The child will be in the hospital until they are drinking well (2-4 days). A soft diet is recommended for up to 2 weeks after the pharyngeal flap surgery is performed. Speech therapy follow-up will be necessary after the surgery.

5 YEARS – 9 YEARS

If a revision or “touch-up” of the lip or tip of the nose is needed, the usual time is before the child goes to kindergarten. This is usually done as an outpatient procedure.

If your child has a gap in the bone of the gum line, a **bone graft** may be needed. Children who have a cleft through the gumline (alveolar ridge) often need to have this area expanded in preparation for the bone graft. The pediatric dentist or orthodontist will do this. This is done in the office – similar to braces. After expansion is completed by the dentist or orthodontist, surgery by the plastic surgeon will be scheduled. Bone from the hip is used to fill the gap in the gum line. This surgery is done as a 23 hour-overnight observation stay. Your child will require 6 weeks of limited physical activity to allow the hip to heal. Additionally oral antibiotics and mouthwash will be prescribed.

11 YEARS – 14 YEARS

As the child grows their face changes. A revision of the lip and/or nose may be desired. If speech becomes a problem after the adenoid pad shrink, a pharyngeal flap may be needed. The length of hospital stay depends on what surgery is performed.

12 YEARS – 16 YEARS

Orthodontics (braces) are started about this time by the pediatric dentist or orthodontist.

15 YEARS – 20 YEARS

This is the time for finishing surgeries. There are several procedures that should not be done until growth is completed (girls 15 – 17 years of age, boys 18 –21 years of age). These surgeries include jaw surgery to bring the upper jaw forward and/or the lower jaw back, septorhinoplasty – to straighten and refine the nose, malar implants – to build up the mid-face (cheekbones), revision of the lip and nose.

It is important to maintain quality health care for your child. Your Plastic Surgeon can refer you to the appropriate health care providers. Remember to keep appointments and to follow instructions given by your health care provider to achieve the best possible outcome for you and your child!

The Plastic Surgery Office has provided the information. If you need additional information, please call 636-7181.