



Patient & Family Guide
2015

Cleft Lip and Palate Surgery



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Cleft Lip and Palate Surgery

Cleft lip and palate surgery is done to correct defects in the lip, nose, jaws and roof of the mouth. Bone from the hip is needed to repair certain deformities (cleft alveoli).

This pamphlet explains about cleft lip and palate surgery.

The day of surgery

- You will be asked to arrive at the hospital at least 1 1/2 hours before your operation and go to the Same Day Surgery Unit. It is on the 10th floor of the Victoria Building, Victoria General Hospital site.
- Do not eat or drink anything after midnight the night before surgery. **Your surgery will be cancelled if you eat or drink after this time.** Nausea and vomiting are more likely to occur during or shortly after your operation.
- Stop smoking at least 24 hours before your surgery. Smoking can make your recovery harder and can delay healing. Smoking is not allowed anywhere on the hospital grounds. This includes electronic cigarettes.

- Do not bring valuables to the hospital. The hospital is not responsible for them.
- The nurse will ask you several health questions and take your vital signs.
- You may need some blood tests.
- The oral surgeon will speak with you unless he/she has already done so.
- You will be asked to change into a hospital gown. Please do not wear any undergarments.
- Please give the nurse the name and phone number of the person you want contacted after your surgery is finished.
- **Note to those waiting:** Patients who are having cleft lip and palate surgery are usually in the Operating Room (OR) and recovery area for 6 to 10 hours. The length of time depends on the type of surgery. At the end of the surgery, the surgeon will contact a friend or family member when asked to do so by the patient.

After your surgery

- You will be taken to the recovery area. You will stay there for 1 to 4 hours depending on the length of your surgery.
- The nurses will take your vital signs several times during your stay in the recovery area. This is normal.
- You will be given medications to make you comfortable, prevent nausea and help with any nasal congestion you may have. These medications will be given through your intravenous (IV) until you are drinking well.
- Until you are steady on your feet, a nurse will help you to the bathroom.
- Facial swelling will go up over 3 days and will gradually go down over 3-4 weeks. Ice packs will be placed on your face to minimize the swelling.
- A small amount of blood will ooze from your mouth and nose for the first 2 days. This is normal.

- You will have stitches on your upper lip (if upper lip surgery was performed). An antibiotic cream will be put on the upper lip several times a day. **You should continue keeping the lip stitches clean and using the antibiotic cream for 2 weeks. The stitches on the lip are usually taken out 1 week after surgery.**
- You may have plastic nose tubes. These let your nose heal properly. **You can breathe through them, as they are hollow. The tubes are sutured in place for 1 week. Do not try to remove them.**
- You will have stitches near your waistline if bone was taken from your hip. **These stitches are often covered by tape for about 2 weeks. It is important to keep this dressing dry. The hip stitches are usually removed 2 weeks after surgery.**
- Once you are fully awake and comfortable, you will be taken to your hospital room.

- Once you are in your room, you will be able to have visitors. We will try to accommodate your needs and your family's needs for contact. We also must respect the rights and needs of other patients. Please check with the nurses about visiting guidelines for your unit. Visitors may be asked to leave when the doctors or nurses come to see you.
- You will be encouraged to drink fluids. The IV will be taken out only when all the IV medications have been given and you are drinking enough fluids.
- Once you feel steady on your feet, you will be encouraged to get up and walk. You may need help walking for the first day.
- If bone was taken from your hip, you may find it uncomfortable to walk for several days. This will get better.
- A dietitian will speak to you about what you can and cannot eat during the healing period. If possible, have the person who will cook your meals at this meeting.

- The surgeon and residents will talk about mouth care with you. It is very important to rinse your mouth as instructed. Keeping your mouth clean after surgery is necessary to prevent infection. Do not brush your teeth until told to do so. Brushing your teeth too soon after surgery can damage the stitches in your mouth.
- The resident surgeons will see you every morning. Please tell them if you have any concerns or problems.
- The surgeon can only estimate how many days you will be in hospital. You will be discharged home only when you are eating and drinking well and are comfortable.
- **If bone was taken from your hip, you will be asked by the surgeons to AVOID taking a bath for a period of time (usually 3 weeks). It is OK to take a shower as long as the hip dressing is kept dry.**
- Do not blow your nose or use a straw to drink for 2 weeks after your surgery. These activities can damage the surgery site.

Discharge checklist

- Have the surgeons told you that you are ready for discharge home?
- Have you arranged for a drive home?
- Have you had your X-rays taken after surgery?
- Has the dietitian spoken with you?
- Have you received a follow-up appointment for the Oral Surgery Clinic?
- Have you received instructions from the oral surgeons about your care at home?
- Have you been told when to have the stitches removed?
- Do you have your prescriptions?

Questions or concerns once you are home

Urgent questions

Call 902-473-5238 between 8:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., Monday to Friday. Messages will be returned as soon as possible.

If it's busy or outside of the above hours, call 902-473-2222 and ask for the oral surgery resident on call. Stay on the line and the resident will be with you shortly.

Non-urgent questions

Call the Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Clinic, Victoria General site between 8:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., Monday to Friday.

The phone number is 902-473-2070. Messages will be returned as soon as possible.

Looking for more health information?

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.
For more information go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

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The information is not intended to be and does not constitute healthcare or medical advice.
If you have any questions, please ask your healthcare provider.

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.