

About Cleft Surgery: FAQ – Parent Contacts

These questions have been based upon the enquiries we receive via social media, phone or email on a daily basis. These sets of questions and answers have been compiled by CLAPA with the help of Cleft Teams and CLAPA Parent/Peer Contacts.

What time do we need to be at the hospital?

- The letter confirming the pre-operation assessment and the operation date will include the time of admission.
- The day before the operation, a member of the Cleft Team will call you to confirm what time you should arrive and the latest times at which your child should have food and drink.

Which ward do we go to before the operation?

- Your child will be admitted to the ward stated on your admission letter.

When will our child go down to theatre, will we have to wait around for a long time?

- The hospitals do their best to minimise how much time children wait before going to theatre. The surgical team on the day will be able to give you the best estimate. Occasionally there are delays for events or emergencies outside the hospital's control.

Do we get to stay with our child while they are having the anaesthetic?

- Both parents are able to go to the anaesthetic room but you will be asked to leave as soon as your child is under anaesthetic.

How long will the operation last?

- This varies depending on the specific operation and the team will be able to give you an answer to this in the clinic when explaining about the operation. The time away from the parents is always longer than the actual operating time.

Will we be called to the recovery room before our child wakes up?

- The recovery nurses call parents down as soon as their child is ready. This can vary between different children, as some children wake up more slowly than others. The recovery nurses may ask you to take a bottle of formula or water down with you.

How long will my child have to stay in hospital?

- Depending on the surgery your child is having, most children stay in hospital for one or two nights. Once they are eating and drinking well and the ward and medical team are happy, your child will be discharged home.

What pain relief will our child have?

- This varies according to the operation and also whether there are any medicines that your child cannot take. Usually there will be regular Ibuprofen, Paracetamol and possibly Morphine, either through a drip or as a liquid by mouth.

Will we get to take pain relief home?

- Yes, the ward provides pain relief on discharge but it is always a good idea to have some Paracetamol and Ibuprofen already at home.

How long will our child need to take pain relief?

- Children's sensitivity to pain varies but it is recommended that you give regular pain relief for one week after discharge. Some children may require pain relief for up to two weeks.

How will our child look after the lip repair?

- The surgical team will explain this to you in clinic. There will usually be some swelling of the lip, nose and cheeks. There may also be some little dimples around the nose from hidden stitches (these dimples disappear as the swelling goes). There may be a little bit of blood in the nostril or on the lip at first.

Which ward will we be staying on after the op?

- If you ask a member of staff on the day of the surgery, they will be able to tell you.

Will we get to talk to our surgeon before and after the operation?

- Yes, the surgeons work as a team. You will meet some of the team in the clinic at the pre-operative assessment. You will also see them when you come in on the day of surgery and again after the operation. The team does a ward round each morning and evening, and there are always members of the surgical team around in case you have questions.

Will our cleft nurse be around?

- One of the cleft nurses will try to visit your child on the ward after their operation. If this is not possible, one of the team will visit the next day though not over the weekend.

How long after the operation will the stitches need removing and where do we go to have them removed?

- If your child has removable, sutures you will need to come back to the hospital five to seven days after surgery.
- Your child will need to be fasted (no food or drink) for three hours before the appointment time given to you, in case your child needs to have some sedation to remove the sutures.

What are the visiting hours?

- Parents can visit any time but most hospitals prefer other visitors (including your other children) to visit between 10am and 8pm.

Can both parents stay? If not what accommodation or hotels nearby are available?

- Only one parent is able to stay with your child on the ward. If you contact Parent Accommodation, they will be able to give you a list of nearby available accommodation.

What facilities are there for parents, for example beds, showers, and kitchen?

- The wards usually have a kitchen for parents to make tea, coffee and other drinks but the wards do not provide food for parents.
- Parents usually have a pull out chair bed if they are in one of the main wards or a fold up bed if their child is in a cubicle. There is usually a bathroom that the parents can use. Talk to the nurse in charge for more information.

What food/drink should we bring?

- Hospitals provide food and drink for your child but if your child has any particular favourite foods, then you may like to bring them with you.
- Hospital policy is that you can only bring in unopened cartons, bottles or tins of your child's formula. If you bring a tin of formula powder, please give it to one of the nurses on the ward and they will send it to the Milk Kitchen to be made up for you.
- If your child is having an operation to their palate they will need to have soft food for two to three weeks after the surgery.

What do I need to pack?

- Your baby's bottle and teats.
- Clothes that open up the front – they may get stained from dribbling after the operation so please do not bring anything too new or precious.
- For babies, bring mittens or socks that can go on their hands to stop them putting their fingers in their mouth.

Do I need to bring toys to keep my child entertained or is there a playroom?

- There are toys on the ward and there is usually a playroom, but if your child has a favourite toy or comforter, you may wish to bring that in with them.

Can I take my child away from the ward while they are staying?

- Yes, it is usually possible to take your child off ward, but you will need to check with the ward staff first. They will probably ask for your mobile phone number in case they need to call you back to the ward for any reason.