



Patient & Family Guide
2021

Cleft Lip and Palate Surgery



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Cleft Lip and Palate Surgery

Cleft lip and palate surgery is done to correct differences in the lip, nose, jaws, and roof of the mouth. Bone from the hip may be needed to make certain changes (cleft alveoli).

The day of surgery

- You will be asked to arrive at the hospital at least 1 1/2 hours (90 minutes) before your surgery. When you arrive, go to Same Day Surgery on the 10th floor of the Victoria Building, Victoria General (VG) 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.** Eating and drinking can cause nausea (feeling sick to your stomach) and vomiting (throwing up) during or after your surgery.
- Stop smoking at least 24 hours (1 day) before your surgery. Smoking can make your recovery harder and can slow 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 the loss of any item.

- Nova Scotia Health is scent-free. Do not use scented products (such as perfume, aftershave, scented deodorant, or hairspray). **If you have used any of these products, your surgery may be cancelled.**
- The nurse will ask you several health questions and take your vital signs (pulse, blood pressure, etc.).
- You may need some blood tests.
- The oral surgeon will talk with you unless they have 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 your contact person to call when your surgery is done.
- Your surgery will take from 6 to 10 hours. The length of time depends on the surgery.
- After the surgery, the surgeon will call your contact person.

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 while you are 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) in your hand or arm until you are drinking well on your own.
- Until you are steady on your feet, a nurse will help you to the bathroom. It is normal to be dizzy when getting up out of bed for the first time after surgery.
- Swelling in your face will go up over 3 days, then slowly go down over 3 to 4 weeks. Ice packs will be placed on your face to lower swelling.
- A small amount of blood will drip 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 done). An antibiotic cream will be put on your upper lip several times a day. **Keep the lip stitches clean and use the antibiotic cream for 2 weeks. The stitches on your 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 held in place with stitches 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 wishes to see you. 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. This is normal.
- If bone was taken from your hip, you may find it uncomfortable to walk for a few 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 health care team will talk about mouth care with you. It is very important to rinse your mouth as instructed. Keeping your mouth clean after surgery prevents 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 questions or concerns.
- The surgeon can only estimate how many days you will be in the hospital. You will be discharged home only when you are eating and drinking well and are comfortable.
- **If bone was taken from your hip, the surgeon will ask you 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 (open the wound).

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?

If you answered “no” to any of these questions, talk with your nurse.

Questions or concerns once you are home

Urgent questions

- › Phone: 902-473-5238
- › Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- Messages will be returned as soon as possible.
- If it is 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

Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Clinic

- › Phone: 902-473-2070
- › Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- Messages will be returned as soon as possible.

Notes:

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Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.
For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>
Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time: call 811 or visit <https://811.novascotia.ca>
Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

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