

CLEFT LIP

[March of Dimes](#) • [University of South Florida](#) • [Florida Department of Health](#)

Welcoming your new baby into your family?

Your baby was born with a special condition. This condition is known as cleft lip. We know this is not easy for you and you may not know how to feel. That's okay. Parents of children with cleft lip feel shock, denial, grief, and even anger. It is all right to feel like this and no one will blame you. It will get better. You are not alone. Soon you will find lots of people and programs to help you. You may want to join a support group. Get to know your baby. Enjoy your baby.

What is a cleft lip?

- A cleft lip is a split in the upper lip. Sometimes the upper gum is also affected.
- It happens between the first 6 and 12 weeks of pregnancy. Sometimes it can be seen in your baby's ultrasound.
- Often a baby with a cleft lip also has a cleft palate. A cleft palate is a split in the roof of the mouth. This leaves a hole between the nose and the mouth.

How does a baby get a cleft lip?

- We do not know the answer to this question. It was not because you did something wrong before or during pregnancy.
- Sometimes cleft lips run in families. This means that a baby with a cleft lip may have someone in the family with a cleft lip.
- Sometimes a cleft lip occurs by itself and other times with birth defects in other body parts.

How will this affect my baby?

- Your baby may have problems with feeding and speech and will need surgery to help him or her talk the right way.
- Children with a cleft lip may have funny-shaped or missing teeth. They need to see the dentist often and keep their teeth clean. Most have to wear braces.
- If your baby also has a cleft palate, he or she may have hearing problems.

BEFORE



How and when will they fix my baby's lip?

- Often a cleft lip is fixed at about 2 to 3 months. As your baby grows, he or she may need more surgeries to fix the cleft lip.
- Ask your doctor to refer you to a team of health experts, called a Cleft Palate Team, or a Craniofacial (say: kray-nee-o-fay-shel) Team.
- This team will work on a plan to meet all of your baby's needs. Then you will know what to expect with your baby.

AFTER



Photos provided courtesy of The Smile Train

Will my baby be retarded?

- Your baby will most likely grow up to be normal and healthy.
- If the cleft is part of other problems (syndrome), he/she should be seen by a geneticist to identify the problem. A geneticist is a doctor who is an expert in diseases that run in families (hereditary).

Where can I go for help?

- Children's Medical Services (CMS): call your local county health department for a CMS clinic in your area or visit: www.cms-kids.com
- Faces: The National Craniofacial Association: 1-800-332-2373 for more information, resources and financial assistance for traveling expenses to a treatment center.
- Florida Family Support Network to find Craniofacial teams, resources, genetic counselors and for help feeding your newborn baby: 1-800-726-2029 or visit: www.floridacleft.org
- For more information: Cleft Palate Foundation: 1-800-24-CLEFT (a 24 hour help line) or www.cleftline.org
- La Leche League for breastfeeding help: 1-800-LALECHE
- March of Dimes: visit marchofdimes.com
- MUMS National Parent to Parent Organization: 1-877-336-5333 (toll free) to get in touch with parents in your area whose children also have a cleft lip.

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