

CLEFT LIP AND PALATE NUTRITION:

Feeding Your Child After Palate Repair - Full Liquid Diet



For at least two weeks after surgery, all foods will need to be liquids. It is important for your child to drink enough liquids after surgery. This will help their body heal.

The liquids you feed your child must have a smooth, even feel, without any small or large pieces of food. You will need to use a blender. For example, a milkshake has a smooth, even feel, but cream of chicken soup **does not** because of the small pieces of chicken.

Talk with your surgeon about how your child will drink after surgery. Your surgeon may allow your child to continue with a bottle or may require a cup.

My surgeon wants my child to drink:

From a special cup (a non-spouted cup without spill valve)

This means there will only be two things in your child's mouth: the tongue and the rim of a cup. Four to six weeks prior to surgery, you and your child's speech language pathologist (SLP) will work together on choosing the best cup for your child. Please see list of cups provided by your child's SLP.

From a standard cup

Resume using the cup your child was using prior to surgery.

From a bottle

Resume using the bottle your child was using prior to surgery. Do not change the type of bottle or nipple before discussing with your SLP or surgeon.

Choose These	Foods to Avoid
Foods should be smooth, liquid and pour from a cup – prepared stage 1 baby food is a good example of the texture.	Seeds, nuts and rice.
Blend meats and vegetables with broth.	Crisp hard foods like chips, cookies, crackers or toast.
Add water or juice to blend fruits.	Acidic foods such as citrus fruits and tomatoes – these may cause your child's mouth to sting during the first week. Once the wound has had a change to heal, these foods should be okay to try.
Use formula as a liquid to thin out meals as well.	
Remember – there should not be any chunks once the foods are blended. See below for step-by-step directions.	Anything that requires chewing.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

When can my child eat solid foods again?

After your follow-up visit, your doctors will determine if your child is ready to eat soft foods. (Reach out to the team dietitian for more information on a soft food diet). Examples of soft foods include pre-made baby foods (stages 1-3), mashed potatoes, well-cooked ground meats, fruit and vegetable purees, hot cereals, and scrambled eggs. Be sure to ask your doctor when your child can return to a normal diet.

What are some things that my child cannot have after surgery?

- Spoons and forks
- Syringes
- Popsicles
- Ice cubes
- Straws
- Pacifiers
- Hands or fingers near the mouth

What about nutrition supplements?

Nutrition supplements are drinks that contain added vitamins and minerals. They can be purchased over the counter at the grocery store or a pharmacy. Not all children need them, so you should ask your pediatrician or dietitian if adding a nutritional supplement would be beneficial for your child. Here is a list of examples of nutritional supplements:

- Pediasure Go & Grow
- Pediasure Sidekicks
- Pediasure Shake Mix
- Organic Pediasmart Powder Dairy
- Organic Pediasmart Powder Soy
- Bright Beginnings Soy Pediatric Drink
- Boost Kids Essentials
- Carnation Breakfast Essentials Powder (for children younger than 10 years old, add ½ packet to 8 oz milk)

What if my child has a poor appetite?

Your child may not eat as much as usual for up to two weeks after surgery. Most children will eat more to “catch up” once they are feeling better. It is important to give your child foods and drinks that are high in calories and protein. You can add calories and protein by using whole milk, broth, cheese, or butter when blending foods.

Make sure that your child gets enough liquid every day. Signs that your child may not be getting enough liquid include:

- Dry mouth
- Decrease in wet diapers
- Decrease in tears
- Dark urine when crying

If you're concerned that your child is not intaking enough, please contact the Cleft Palate Team dietitian, who will be able to provide some recommendations for increasing the calories and protein in your child's fluids.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARING LIQUID FOOD USING A BLENDER OR FOOD PROCESSOR

1. Start with steamed fruits and vegetables or thoroughly cooked meats and starches such as potatoes.
2. Food should be cut into pieces that are about the size of your thumbnail.
3. Place food in a food processor or blender, and then add enough liquid to cover the food (broth, water, formula, breast milk).
4. Blend until smooth (similar to stage 1 baby food), adding more liquid if needed to make the food thin enough to drip from a cup.
5. Allow food to cool and serve from an open cup.



QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

Please contact the Cleft Lip and Palate team at 443-849-6050.

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