



Health and  
Social Care



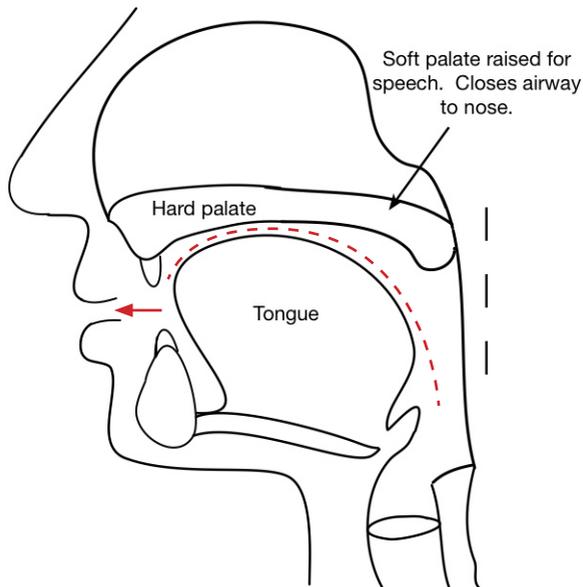
Submucous cleft palate

# What is a submucous cleft palate?

A submucous cleft palate is sometimes called a “hidden cleft palate”. It means the muscles have not joined together but there is skin over the top.

A submucous cleft palate happens when the muscles in the soft palate do not fuse together when your baby is growing, in the early weeks of pregnancy.

The soft palate’s job is to separate off the nose from the mouth. It stops air leaking through your nose for speech sounds such as “p, b, t, s” etc. It also helps to direct food/drink down to your stomach, stopping it going into your nose.



## What are the symptoms? What does this mean for my child?

Often a submucous cleft palate is not found until your child starts to speak. If their palate is not working very well, too much air passes through their nose. This results in “nasal sounding” speech. It can affect how your child moves their tongue, lips and teeth to make different sounds.

They may also have had some feeding difficulties as a baby. If the soft palate cannot work properly, this sometimes means food or drink escapes through the nose.

Children with palate problems are at increased risk of fluctuating hearing loss. Even if you think your child’s hearing is good, we would recommend regular hearing tests.

## Who diagnoses a submucous cleft palate?

Your child is usually referred to a Specialist Speech and Language Therapist for an assessment. They will listen carefully to your child’s speech. They will talk to you about your child’s development. They will need to look inside your child’s mouth.

If the Speech and Language Therapist suspects there may be a problem with the palate, they will discuss your child with the Cleft Team.

You may then be invited to meet the team for another appointment. The Cleft Team is made up of a surgeon, specialist nurse, psychologist, audiologist and dentist.

Some children will need further assessments. We will talk to you about this if this is required.



## What is the treatment?

If your child does have a submucous cleft palate, a number of treatment options are available. Your child may need an operation, however in many cases no further input is needed. We will discuss this together with you in detail.

Your child may also need speech and language therapy to help them move their tongue, lips and teeth in the right way.

## Where can I find more information?

The Cleft Lip and Palate Team

Pamela Larmour: Regional Cleft Co-ordinator

Tel: 07385 430707

The Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Falls Road

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