



Health and  
Social Care



# Cleft lip repair/ adhesion

Cleft Lip and Palate Service

## Why has my child been offered a lip repair?

Your child has been diagnosed with a cleft lip.

A cleft lip is present when there is a gap in the muscle of the top lip. The affected muscle is the one which allows us to purse our lips (used when we say “oooh”). Typically, this muscle is a complete circle. However, in the case of a cleft lip, the circle of muscle has not fused together.

There are 2 kinds of cleft lip: unilateral (1 gap) or bilateral (2 gaps).

## What is a lip repair?

Although it might look like part of the lip missing, the tissue is present but it has not joined together.

The surgeon will repair the muscle and the skin of the lip. They will attempt to hide the scar in the natural vertical lines of the lip (the ‘cupids’ bow’/ philtrum).

## What is a lip adhesion?

Sometimes the gap in the muscle is wide, or there are 2 gaps in the lip (a bilateral cleft lip). This can mean that 2 steps are required. In the first operation, the surgeon will perform a lip adhesion. This means that they will stitch together the 2 edges of skin. The purpose of this is to reduce the size of the gap in the lip and gum (if your child has a cleft of their alveolus/ gum). A lip adhesion allows the lip to act like an elastic to pull the sides of the lip together.

When the lip, nose and gum are in a better position, the surgeon will repair the muscle inside the lip in a second operation.

## How will this help my child?

When your child's lip has been repaired, they will be able to round and purse their lips. This is important for eating and for speech.

## Who can I contact if I am worried or have a question?

If you have any concerns or questions, you can call the Cleft Co-Ordinator, Pamela Larmour, on 07385 430707. She will be able to direct your question to the appropriate clinician. You can also email her on [pamela.larmour@belfasttrust.hscni.net](mailto:pamela.larmour@belfasttrust.hscni.net)

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