



Health and  
Social Care



# Palate repair

Speech and Language Therapy

# Why has my child been offered a palate repair?

Your child has been diagnosed with a cleft palate or submucous cleft palate.

A cleft palate is present when the roof of the mouth has not fused together during pregnancy. This means that nasal (nose) and oral (mouth) spaces are not separate.

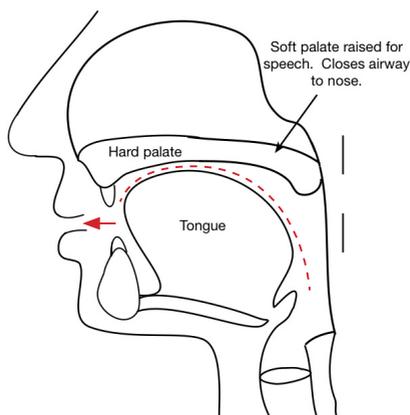
A submucous cleft palate is sometimes called a “hidden cleft palate”. It means the muscles have not joined together but there is skin over the top.

We need our palate to separate off our nose from our mouth. The palate has a role in speaking, eating and drinking.

The soft palate should lift up and down against the back of the throat, sealing off the nose from the mouth.

When the soft palate lifts, the air from our lungs is directed through our mouths. We then use our tongue, lips and teeth to change this air into various shapes to make different speech sounds.

The soft palate also lifts when we eat. This means food/drink does not leak through our nose.



## What is a palate repair?

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

The surgeon will join the palate together in 3 layers; the nasal layer (inside the nose), the muscle layer, and the oral layer (inside the mouth).

## How will this help my child?

A palate has an important role in speaking and feeding.

The soft palate should move up and down to separate off the nose from the mouth. This stops air leaking through the nose for speech sounds such as “p, b, t, s”.

The palate also helps to direct food/drink down into your stomach, stopping it from travelling into your nose.

## 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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