Cleft lip is a congenital defect in the upper lip where the maxillary prominence fails to merge with the merged medial nasal prominence; thought to be caused by faulty migration of the mesoderm in the head region. It can include cleft palate that is a congenital fissure of the soft and/or hard palate, due to faulty fusion (ICD 9 code 749)

Oral Manifestations and Considerations

Oral
- Congenitally missing teeth
- Supernumerary teeth
- Malformed teeth
- Fistulas may be obturated
- Ectopic eruption of primary maxillary anterior dentition

Other Potential Disorders/Concerns
- Many conditions may have an associated cleft
- Understanding the condition is critical to dental management of the patient

Oral Side Effects of Commonly Prescribed Medications

Medication
- Persons with clefts may have other conditions for which they need medication, but typically no special medications are taken.

Parent/Caregiver Support and Guidance
- Surgical scarring may limit mobility of maxillary lip and vestibule. Advise caution when manipulating this area.
- Discourage consumption of cariogenic foods and beverages.
- Prescribe sugar-free medications, if available.
- Recommend preventive measures such as topical fluoride and sealants.
- Advise the use of fluoridated toothpaste twice daily and support the family in following dental care instructions.
- Instruct caregiver on appropriate protocol following dental trauma (locate/preserve missing tooth and put in cold milk; seek immediate professional care).
- Review safety issues appropriate to the age of the child, such as mouth guards to prevent oral-facial trauma.
- Recommend rinsing with water thoroughly after taking each dose of sugar containing medication and frequent water intake for patients taking xerostomic medication.
- Discuss habits that may harm the child’s teeth such as propping baby bottles, putting child to bed with bottle.

Additional information: Special Needs Fact Sheets for Providers and Caregivers
Children with Cleft Lip and Palate continued

References

- Reisberg, D.J, Dental and Prosthodontic Care for Patients With Cleft or Craniofacial Conditions, *Cleft PalateCraniofac J*;2000Nov; 37 (6): 534–537. Review.

Additional Resources

- NIH Institute for Cleft Lip and Palate
- Special Care: an Oral Health Professionals Guide to Serving Young Children with Special Health Care Needs
- Bright Futures Oral Health Pocket Guide
- American Academy of Pediatrics Oral Health Initiative
- MCH Resource Center
- ASTDD-Special Needs
- Block Oral Disease, MA
- NOHIC-NIDCR publications