

Oral Health Fact Sheet for Medical Professionals

Children with Cleft Lip and Palate

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

- Policy on management of patients cleft lip/palate and other craniofacial anomalies. *Pediatr Dent*. 2008-2009;30(7 Suppl):238-9. American Academy on Pediatric Dentistry Clinical Affairs Committee; American Academy on Pediatric Dentistry Council on Clinical Affairs.
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- Rivkin, C.J, Keith, O,, Crawford, P.J, ,Hathorn, I.S. Dental care for the patient with a cleft lip and palate. Part 2: The mixed dentition stage through to adolescence and young adulthood. *Br Dent J*. 2000 Feb 12;188(3):131-4.

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](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry: 2011–2012 Definitions, Oral Health Policies and Clinical Guidelines](#)
- [MCH Resource Center](#)
- [ASTDD-Special Needs](#)
- [Block Oral Disease, MA](#)
- [NOHIC-NIDCR publications](#)