

Medical Center

(804) 828-3042

In the tradition of the Medical College of Virginia

Getting Ready for Cleft Palate Surgery

Be at the hospital 2 hours before your surgery time.

Eating Before Surgery

- Your child can eat food or have a bottle up to 6 hours before surgery. This means if surgery is planned for 7:30 AM, the last meal should be finished by 1:30 AM.
- You can give your child clear liquids or breast milk up to 3 hours before surgery. Examples of clear liquids are apple juice, Pedialyte, and water.

What to Bring to the Hospital

- Wear comfortable clothes and leave any valuables at home.
- Photo ID is needed.
- Favorite blankets, stuffed animals, toys, music CD's will help comfort your child. CD players are available.
- If your baby uses special bottles or nipples bring them with you.
- You do not need to bring diapers or formula.

Where to Park

- The closest and easiest choice is valet parking - \$5 per day

Medical Center

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- If you don't mind a short walk, you may self-park in the Visitor's Parking Deck -\$2 per day. (Don't forget to validate your parking ticket at the information desk at the Gateway Building or Ambulatory Care Center).

Preparing for Surgery

- Your child will change into a hospital gown.
- Any final paperwork will be completed.
- You will talk with your child's pediatric anesthesiologist. This is the doctor who gives your child the medicine used to put your child to sleep before the surgery and keeps your child safe and comfortable during the operation.
- Nothing painful will be done to your child while awake. Your child will be given medicine through a special mask to go to sleep. Once asleep, an IV will be placed.

Medical Center

In the tradition of the Medical College of Virginia

During Your Child's Surgery

- You will get a pager – you do not have to sit in the waiting room. Eat breakfast or take a walk around the hospital.
- The nurse in the operating room will call you to let you know when the operation starts. You will have updates every hour.
- Dr. Rhodes will talk with you once your child is safely in the recovery room.
- After a period of time, your child will be moved to his hospital room. You will be with your child as soon as possible.

What to Expect After Cleft Palate Surgery

In The Hospital

- Your child may be fussy, upset, or crying when he awakes. This is normal. During the surgery your child gets medicine so the palate will be numb and not hurt. This usually lasts all day.
- Your child will be given medicine - Tylenol and Ibuprofen - while the palate is still numb to make sure he or she is comfortable.

Medical Center

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- Before the palate surgery, your child was used to breathing with a large opening between his nose and mouth. Now that the palate is closed, it will take some time for your child to “relearn” how to breathe. He may make snoring noises or keep his mouth open.
- On your child’s finger or toe is a sticker with a red light. This is called a pulse oximeter. It makes sure your child is getting enough oxygen.
- Your child will receive IV fluids after the surgery. Even if your baby is fussy and does not drink much, he or she will be well hydrated.
- Your child will spend at least one night in the hospital.
- All stitches in the palate dissolve on their own. This may take several weeks.

Medical Center

In the tradition of the Medical College of Virginia

Eating After Surgery

- Your child may not eat or drink as much as usual for a few days.
- He is allowed to eat and drink the same way as before the surgery. Bottles, sippy cups, straws and spoons are OK.
- Soft foods and liquids are fine after surgery. No hard or crunchy foods should be given until your follow up appointment in 2-3 weeks. Examples of hard/crunchy foods include potato chips, hard crusts of bread, pretzels and lollipops.
- Dr. Rhodes does not recommend “no-no’s” or any type of arm restraints.
- Using a pacifier is OK.

Getting Back to Normal

- Make sure you have Children’s Tylenol, Children’s Ibuprofen, and saline nasal spray at home.
- Your child will likely get a stuffy nose after the surgery. Some parents have found that squirts of saline nasal spray help to keep their children comfortable. A humidifier can be helpful in the post operative period; or, some parents run a hot shower to get the bathroom steamy, and hold their child in the bathroom for a few minutes.
- If there is nasal crusting, you may gently use a Q-tip and some plain saline to help clear the nostril.
- Dr. Rhodes recommends giving alternately both Children’s Tylenol and Children’s Ibuprofen for 5 days while they are awake.



V i r g i n i a C o m m o n w e a l t h U n i v e r s i t y

Medical Center

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- Some children have trouble sleeping through the night after surgery. For the first few days, give your child lots of love and understanding. After a week or so, many parents try to re-establish their child's pre-surgery routine.

Do not hesitate to call us if you have any questions or concerns 804-828-3042

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