

Cleft Lip and Palate Feeding Recommendations

1 Some children are born with a cleft—a hole, gap, or slit in their lip or a hole in the roof of their mouth (which may not be visible from the outside).



Unilateral Cleft Lip

Cleft Lip

Cleft Lip and Palate

Bilateral Cleft Lip and Palate

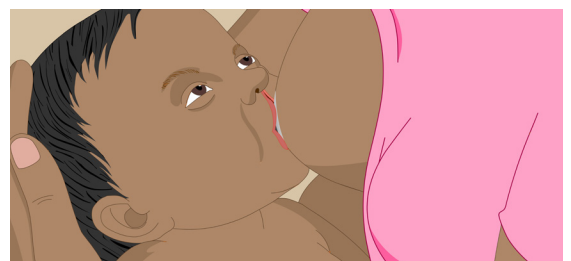
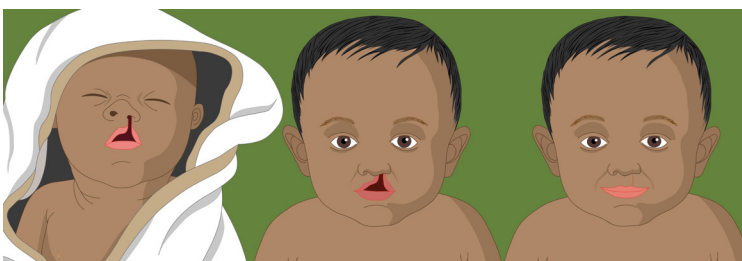
Cleft Palate

2 Surgery is very important because without it a child may not speak properly, may have an increased risk of infections, and may have problems taking in food and milk.

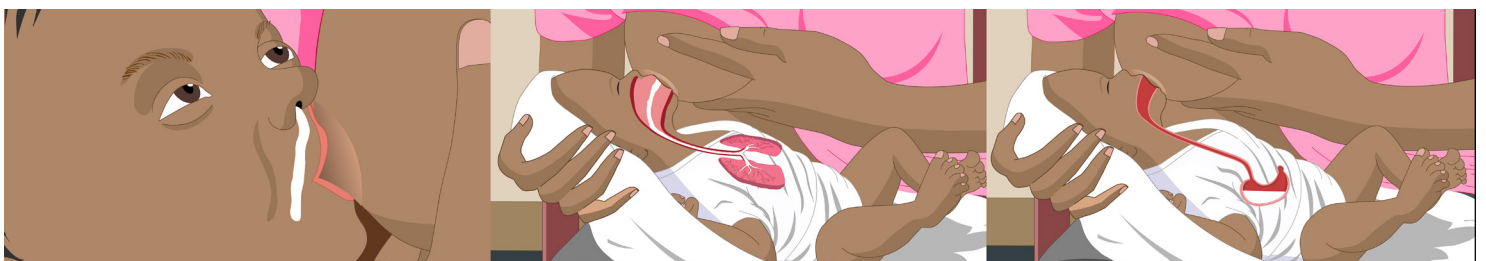


3 A Smile Train surgeon can repair a cleft for free at a Smile Train partner hospital. Surgery is the only way to fully repair the gap.

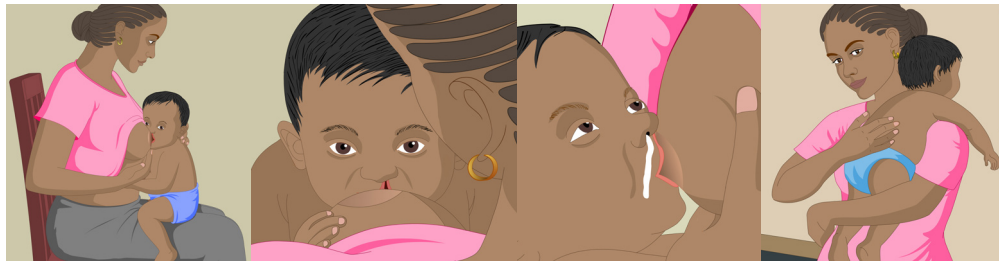
4 To be healthy and strong enough to receive surgery it is important that babies with clefts are fed adequately.



5 BUT - sometimes it is difficult for babies with clefts to feed since milk can come out of the nose or may even go into their lungs. Or the babies may suck in air, and they may seem full and fall asleep even though they haven't received enough nourishment.



6 It is important for a child to be well nourished so that they can receive surgery. Mother must be committed to trying different feeding strategies to see what works for her and her baby. It is best to feed the child directly from the breast, if possible. Some strategies are:



Have the child feed sitting upright

Position the nipple to the side of the mouth that is not cut

Gently squeeze the breast to increase the flow of milk

Feed and burp children more often than normal

7 If feeding from the breast is not possible, it is essential that the mother continues to feed the baby using other means. Some strategies are:



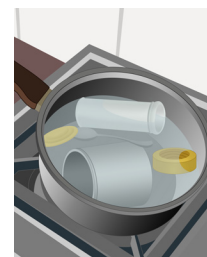
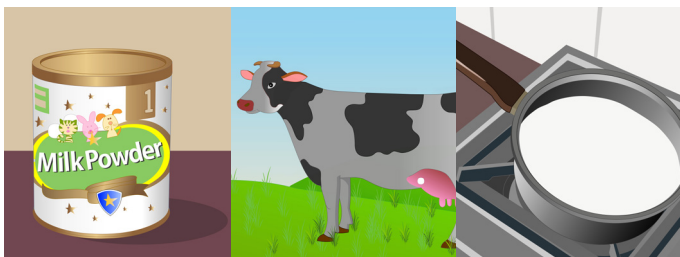
The mother can express milk from the breast to feed to the baby with a spoon or bottle.



The mother can SLIGHTLY enlarge the hole of the teat of a feeding bottle to increase the flow of milk.

8 If breast milk is not at all available, commercial formula is the next best option but **must** be prepared safely according to the manufacturer's instructions. Cow's milk should only be a last option when neither breastmilk nor formula are available.

9 Make sure any devices used for feeding are clean and sterilized by boiling water for at least 10 minutes. Unclean spoons and bottles can lead to fever and infection.



10 Please do not forget to take your baby to the nearest Smile Train center. A doctor at the center will examine the child and tell you when to come to the hospital for surgery.

