

# FURLOW PALATOPLASTY

This leaflet explains all about you/your child's Furlow palatoplasty operation.

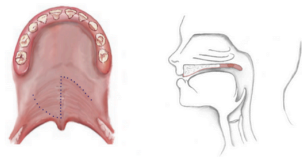
## SPIRES CLEFT CENTRE



### WHAT IS A FURLOW PALATOPLASTY?

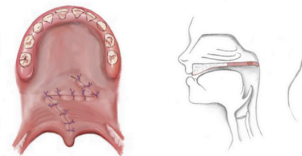
A Furlow palatoplasty is a surgical operation, which both **repositions the muscles** and **increases the length** of the soft palate (roof of the mouth).

A cut in the shape of a 'Z' is made in the palate, the tissues rearranged and then carefully stitched back together.



BEFORE

The operation is performed with you/ your child asleep under general anaesthetic.



AFTER

### WHEN IS A FURLOW PALATOPLASTY USUALLY PERFORMED?

This operation can be **performed at any age**, during childhood or adulthood.

### HOW LONG DOES A FURLOW PALATOPLASTY USUALLY TAKE?

The operation usually takes **around 2 hours**, however the time spent with the cleft surgery team will likely be longer due to the need to go to sleep and wake up safely with the anaesthetic team.

### WHY DO I/DOES MY CHILD NEED A FURLOW PALATOPLASTY?

The palate is sometimes unable to reach the pharynx (backwall of the throat) during speech and this allows too much air to pass up into the nose when talking. This can give speech a **nasal quality** (hypernasality), and it may even be possible to hear air escaping through the nose.

A Furlow palatoplasty can help improve speech in two ways:

- 1) It **repositions the muscles backwards in the palate**, which helps to lift the palate upwards towards the pharynx.
- 2) It **lengthens the palate**, which increases the likelihood that it will be able to reach the pharynx.

The aim of this operation is to **improve speech** and/or **reduce nasal regurgitation** (food/drink coming out of the nose) by helping the palate to make a seal with the pharynx during talking and reduce air escape through the nose.

### ARE THERE ANY RISKS?

This is a safe procedure but as with all surgical operations, there are risks involved.

In the event of any complications or an unsatisfactory result, the cleft team will assess you/your child and give advice about further management, which may include the offer of further surgery. You can contact the cleft team using the details on the back of this leaflet.

Although the Furlow palatoplasty is usually very effective, there is **no guarantee that speech will improve** and there is a risk that after the operation there will still be too much air in the nose during speech (persistent hypernasality) or not enough air going through the nose during speech (hyponasality). The risk of **sleep apnoea** (blocking airflow through the nose during sleep) is low.

It will not be possible to judge the impact of the Furlow palatoplasty immediately due to **swelling**. The earliest assessment will be made 6 months after the operation by the speech therapists, although it will take up to 1 year before the final result is known.

There is a small risk of **bleeding**. You may notice blood stained mucous or saliva coming from your/your child's nose or mouth, and this is common in the first few days after the operation but should settle. If you see bright red bleeding that does not stop within 10 minutes, please attend your nearest hospital Emergency Department.

Antibiotics will be given in the operation to reduce the risk of **infection**. If you/your child becomes unwell, develops a temperature or has a smelly breath then please contact the cleft team as this could be a sign of an infection. Wounds breaking down, a hole in the palate (fistula) and parts of the palate tissue failing to heal are uncommon.

## WHAT DO I NEED TO DO TO PREPARE FOR MY/MY CHILD'S SURGERY?

You/your child will need to be **well in yourself/themselves** to be able to have a Furlow palatoplasty. Please let the team know if you/your child has a new illness (such as coughs, colds and fevers) before the operation so that we can safely reschedule the operation date.

Keeping the teeth clean by **regular tooth brushing** is very important before the operation to help the body to recover and heal after the operation.

You will need to prepare an **overnight bag** including clothes, pyjamas, a washbag, a soft toothbrush and one or two favourite activities.

## WHAT HAPPENS ON THE DAY OF THE OPERATION?

You will be given specific instructions about where and when to attend on the day, including the last time eating and drinking is allowed.

You will meet with the cleft surgical team (nurses, anaesthetists and surgeon) on the day of the operation and they can answer any questions you have.

## WILL I/MY CHILD BE COMFORTABLE WHEN THEY WAKE UP?

Yes. Your/your child's mouth will be **numb** for a few hours after the operation because of local anaesthetic given whilst asleep, and this will wear off overnight.

You/your child will also have been given pain killers during the operation and these will be topped up regularly afterwards. You will find a chart on the discharge advice sheet to help record medicine doses when at home.

## HOW LONG WILL I/MY CHILD NEED TO STAY IN HOSPITAL?

Most patients stay in hospital for **1 night** after a Furlow palatoplasty. One parent can stay on the ward overnight with their child.

The cleft team will review you/your child on the ward the day after the operation and, if comfortable and the surgery site is healthy, then you will be able to go home.

## HOW DO I LOOK AFTER MYSELF/MY CHILD POST-OPERATION?

The cleft team will provide you with any specialist medication required. Please ensure you have **paracetamol and ibuprofen** at home as you will need to give these regularly according to the instructions provided for approximately 1 week.



It is important to **keep teeth really clean** by brushing them twice a day with a soft toothbrush and toothpaste (fluoride strength 1450ppm), as this helps the wounds to heal. The stitches in the mouth will dissolve over the coming weeks.



You/your child should be able to **return to work/school after 1-2 weeks**. Rigorous exercise, swimming and contact sports should be avoided for 6 weeks.



## WHEN AND WHAT CAN I/MY CHILD EAT AND DRINK?

You/your child will be able to eat and drink straight away after the operation. Please avoid hot drinks/food on the day of surgery. We recommend a **soft/mashed diet** (by avoiding hard foods such as toast, crisps and biscuits) for **2 weeks**. It is important to **rinse the mouth with water** after meals to keep the area clean.

## WHEN WILL I/MY CHILD BE SEEN AGAIN BY THE TEAM?

The cleft nurses will make contact by phone call within the **first week** after the operation. You will receive a clinic appointment to see the **surgeon 6 weeks** after the operation. At 6 months after the operation, we will arrange a speech assessment with the speech therapist. At 1 year after the operation, we will arrange a clinic appointment with the surgeon and speech therapist.

If you have any concerns and would like to contact the team before your appointments please use the contact details below.

## CONTACTS

### Clinical Nurse Specialists

**Cleft Nurses** - 07717805724, Monday, Wednesday to Friday 8am - 5pm

- 07717805721, Monday to Friday 8am - 4pm

**On call nurse** - 07500 127 657, Weekends and Bank Holidays 8am - 4pm

### Salisbury Hospital

**Sarum Ward** - 01722 336262 ext 2560/2561, all hours

**Cleft Office** - 01722 345521 or [sft.spirescleftcentre@nhs.net](mailto:sft.spirescleftcentre@nhs.net), Monday to Friday 8am - 4pm