

Feeding Your Newborn with a Cleft

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Feeding an infant with Cleft Lip Only

If your baby has a cleft lip only (*no cleft palate*), your baby will be able to breastfeed or drink normally from a bottle. You may need the assistance of a lactation consultant to help your baby latch onto your breast. After the baby has surgery to close the lip, she or he will be able to breastfeed or drink from a bottle as soon as they are interested. If you have any concerns about your baby's ability to feed, please contact the Craniofacial Team!

Feeding an infant with Cleft Palate

Babies with a cleft palate usually **cannot breastfeed** successfully because of the hole in the roof of their mouths and **must be fed by bottle**. You may either pump your breastmilk and offer it in a bottle or give the baby formula. The goal is to make it easier for the baby to feed without the milk flowing too fast. We encourage you to keep the baby's head up at a **45-degree angle** during feedings.

The cleft or "hole" in the roof of the baby's mouth may cause milk to come out of the baby's nose when feeding or sneezing. This is normal. If the baby is having difficulty breathing because of milk passing into the nose, please call the Craniofacial Team at **(401) 444-2299**.

There are special cleft palate feeding bottles, and we typically start with the Dr. Brown Specialty Feeding System.™ Sometimes, despite the special feeding bottles, babies will still have feeding difficulties and will benefit from an evaluation by one of our feeding specialists. The goal is for your baby to gain weight and grow like other babies. Information on the Dr. Brown Specialty Feeding System can be found at:

<https://www.drbrownsbaby.com/medical/products/specialty-feeding/>

Making sure your baby gets enough food and is gaining weight

Babies grow, develop and change rapidly in the first year. They need proper nutrition to gain weight, to grow in length, and for their brains to develop. Infants with a cleft lip, cleft palate or combined cleft lip/palate are at risk for being underweight. It is helpful to keep a daily record or diary of how much and how often your baby is eating. Discuss these concerns with the Craniofacial Team and with your pediatrician. If a baby is having difficulty gaining weight, you may be given a special recipe to fortify the breastmilk or formula. Each child is unique, so it is difficult to predict exactly how much your baby should drink. The best way to know if your child is gaining weight and growing is to have the baby's weight checked weekly. The goal is for the infant to gain about 1 ounce per day.

Your baby will be seen in Dr. Woo's office within the first couple of weeks after birth to make sure she or he is feeding well and not losing weight. If you have any concerns about your baby's feeding or weight gain, please call the Craniofacial Team at (401) 444-2299.

General Breastfeeding Guidelines

Breastmilk is an ideal food for infants and can help protect your baby from infections. The frequency of feeds varies for each infant. Infants can typically be fed "on demand" to meet their needs. During the first few weeks of life, infants will typically feed for 10-15 minutes every 2-3 hours. Gradually, the time between feedings will increase. To help increase milk production and flow, you should try to use both breasts equally for each feeding. If you are pumping, pump the milk from each breast for the same amount of time. The mother will need to eat a well-balanced diet to make enough milk and to give the baby the proper calories and nutrients to gain weight.

General Formula Feeding Guidelines

Infant formulas are made to be like breastmilk and are an excellent option when breastfeeding/breastmilk is not possible. Your pediatrician, a dietician, or the Craniofacial Team can help you select a formula for your baby. Formula comes in many forms (powder, concentrated liquid or ready-to-feed). Follow the instructions on the bottle carefully to make sure you are preparing it correctly.

Keep prepared formula or liquid formula in the refrigerator and throw it away after 48 hours. After you offer the baby the bottle, throw away any unused milk after 1 hour. Be sure to check the temperature of the milk before giving it to your baby. Holding, cuddling and

bonding with your baby during feeds is important. You should not “prop” the bottle so that the baby can eat alone.

If you have any questions at all, **please call the Craniofacial Team at (401) 444-2299**. We are always happy to help!

Feeding Record/Diary

Baby's Name:

Mother/Father's Name:

Date of Birth: _____

Weight at Birth: _____

Date	Time	mL/cc	Notes