

Cleft Lip and Cleft Palate

What are cleft lip and cleft palate?

Approximately 1 out of every 600 babies are born with a **cleft** (opening) in the **upper lip** or **palate** (roof of the mouth). Normally, as a baby is developing, the tissues that form the upper lip and palate grow together and eventually fuse. For babies with a cleft lip and/or cleft palate, this fusion did not occur properly.

Clefts of the upper lip and/or palate may be **unilateral** (only one side of the mouth affected) or **bilateral** (both sides affected). In addition, a baby may have a cleft lip, a cleft palate, or both.



What causes cleft lip and cleft palate?

For most babies with cleft lip and/or cleft palate, the reason for the improper fusion is not known. Some families have a **hereditary** form of cleft lip and/or palate, meaning that multiple family members have been born with a cleft lip or palate. Clefts of the upper lip or palate may be **isolated** (no other birth defects are found), or they may be associated with other birth defects. Your child's doctor(s) will perform a thorough examination of your child to identify any other birth defects which may be present. Cleft lip and/or cleft palate are most commonly seen in people of Asian descent; boys are more often affected than girls.

How are cleft lip and cleft palate treated?

Cleft lip and cleft palate can be surgically corrected. The correction of the cleft is usually done in stages; these surgeries must be performed when your child is the correct age and size and in good health. Your child's doctor(s) will discuss appropriate treatment options with you.

For more information

Cleft Palate Foundation - <http://www.cleftline.org/>

Craniofacial Center University of Illinois at Chicago - <http://uillinoismedcenter.org/content.cfm/craniofacial>