

The National Cleft Surgical
Service for Scotland

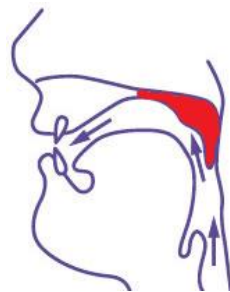


So... you're having **Speech Surgery?**

Everything you need to know -
A guide for children

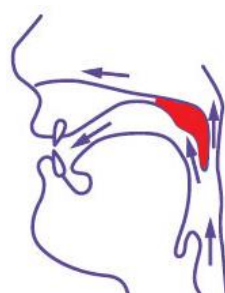
What is speech surgery for?

The **soft palate** (the soft bit behind the roof of your mouth) is really helpful for speech. **Its job is to reach and close off the back of the throat when you are talking.** This means speech comes out of the mouth. This makes speech more powerful, and some sounds clearer.



The palate (red) reaches the back of the throat, so air leaves the mouth

Children born with a gap (called 'cleft') in their palate have surgery to close it when they are a baby. This is to help it reach the back of the throat. But sometimes, the palate still finds it hard to reach.



The palate (red) can't reach the back of the throat, so air leaves the mouth and nose.

Some children don't have a cleft, but their palate also finds it hard to reach.

This means speech comes out of the nose as well as the mouth. **This can make speech quieter, and some sounds less clear.**

Why do I need speech surgery?

Your Speech and Language Therapist will have listened to your speech and the Cleft Team think speech surgery might help if you find it hard to make some sounds (like p, b, t, s or sh), or if too much air

comes down your nose when you are talking. **An operation may make talking easier, or make speech clearer to others.** We know that being asked to repeat things or speak louder is annoying!

What happens in speech surgery?

There are different types of speech surgery. The main types are:

- Carefully opening and then closing the gap you had repaired as a baby
- Moving the muscles around to build up the back of the throat or lengthen the palate.

All of these can help the palate reach the back of the throat. Some children will have more than one of these. The Surgeon will talk to you and your family about the best surgery for you.

What should I do before speech surgery?

Before your speech surgery it is important to:

- **Brush your teeth and use mouthwash!** This will help your mouth to heal after surgery.
- **Fill in the back page!** It asks things like soft food you like, and fun things you can do while you are resting after surgery



Where will my speech surgery happen?



The giant iPads in the lobby

Your speech surgery will happen in the Royal Hospital for Children in **Glasgow**. There are lots of fun things here- even giant iPads in the lobby, and a cinema!



Your room (and TV!) may be like this

When you have your speech surgery, you will stay in a place called Ward 3B. This is usually just for 1 or 2 nights. **You normally have your own room.**

To help you feel at home, **an adult can stay in a bed next to you.** You can also bring a few toys, or borrow some from the play team on the ward.

To find out more about the hospital, you can **visit the website** with your adult(s), or **write down questions** for your adult(s) to ask the nurses.

What happens once I'm in hospital?

When you go to hospital, you will go straight to Ward 3B. The nurses will tell you how long you have to wait until your speech surgery.

You're **not allowed to eat for a few hours** before your speech surgery. The nurses will say when this starts.



You're not allowed to eat for a few hours before your surgery

Keeping busy can help if you are hungry or worried. To make your stay fun, the play team have **toys and games**, and **most rooms have TVs (with games on!)**.

You will also have a special spray or cream put on the back of your hand. It makes the skin so numb you can't feel it! This lets the nurses put a **tiny tube in your hand** to give you medicine.

What happens when the wait is over?



The sleep doctors' room has lots of machines in it

When you are ready, you will walk (or ride in a bed!) to a room with lots of machines in it. Here, the sleep doctors will give you some medicine. It will put you in a **very deep sleep**.

You can take the sleep medicine either **through a mask** (which some people say smells like rubber or felt tip pens), **or through the tube in your hand**. An adult can be with you, if you like.

The medicine makes your eyes feel very heavy, and you'll soon be fast asleep. This means **you won't feel or remember any of your speech surgery!** The surgeons are very careful when they do your surgery.

It usually takes them between 1 to 2 and a half hours. But you won't feel or remember any of it!



How will I feel afterwards?

Some children feel sick or dizzy

waking up, but the nurses help!

You'll have a **tube of water** in the back of your hand so you don't get thirsty.

It usually takes a couple of hours- but you will be asleep!

Your **mouth may look or feel like a different shape**, so talking might feel odd. You will have special '**stitches**' in your mouth, and sometimes a wee bit of blood. You might have some bruises. But don't worry- you'll look and feel back to normal soon!

You'll get medicine to stay comfy, and should be **home in a night or two**. The stitches will fall out when they are ready. After **a week or two off school** and lots of rest, you should feel fine!

Am I allowed to talk afterwards?

Yes! It might feel odd, but it's good for your mouth!

What can I eat afterwards?

Once you feel ready to eat, you are only allowed **soft food for a few weeks**- like soup, mash or ice cream. Use the space on the back to list soft foods you like!

It's important to have a drink (like water) after eating to wash bits of food away. This helps your mouth heal.

What will my speech be like?

Some people's speech gets **easier straight after surgery**. Sometimes this is because of swelling. After the swelling, **some people's speech gets harder again** while their mouth gets used to changes.

After a few months, your mouth is used to the changes and speech might be easier than ever!

The Speech and Language Therapists in the cleft teams will see you after 6-8 weeks to listen to your speech and plan any therapy.



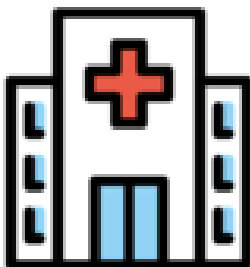
What if I feel worried?

Most people feel a bit worried about going to hospital. This is totally normal! If you are worried about having your speech surgery, **tell your adult(s)**.

They can answer or find out things you're not sure about. If you are very worried, your adult(s) can ask **someone from the hospital to help you feel better.**

There are people who can talk and play with you, to help you feel less worried about your speech surgery.

If you would like to request an appointment, or have any questions, please contact the **Cleft Team Coordinators** on **0141 451 6524** or **ggc.CleftTeamScotland@nhs.scot**



Remember to fill in the back page! It asks things like soft food you like, and fun things you can do while you are resting after surgery





✎ My Speech Surgery: fill in with your adult(s)!

1. My speech surgery will happen on

2. Type of surgery:

i. Closing the gap I had as a baby

ii. Moving the muscles to build up the back of my throat

iii. Moving the muscles to lengthen the back of my throat

3. I'd prefer sleep medicine: through a mask
through a tube in my hand

Soft foods I like

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Fun things I can do in hospital

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Questions for the team

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