

## **Antenatal diagnosis of cleft lip and palate**

You have recently been told that your baby may be born with a cleft lip and/or palate. A problem with your unborn infant was perhaps the last thought in your minds when you attended for your first scan. Parents tell us the diagnosis of a cleft can create shock, disbelief and some feelings of uncertainty about the future.

## **What is a cleft lip and/or palate**

At about 4 – 8 weeks after conception your baby's lip is formed. If this does not happen the result is a gap in the lip on either one or both sides. This is known as a cleft lip. Inside the mouth the two sides of the palate fuse at about 10 – 12 weeks after conception. If this does not happen your baby will have a cleft palate. Your baby may have a cleft lip only, a cleft palate only, or a cleft lip and palate. This may occur on one (unilateral) or both (bilateral) sides of the mouth.

## **What causes cleft lip and/ or palate?**

The causes of a cleft remain unknown but sometimes may possibly have a genetic link which for some reason has been triggered into action with your baby. In the UK around 1 in 700 babies are born with this condition. In the light of current knowledge, there is probably nothing that you have done that has caused the cleft, nor is there anything that you could have done to prevent the cleft from happening.

## **How will it affect my child?**

For most children born with a cleft, the cleft is an isolated problem, which will not affect the general development of your child. He or she should be able to lead a full and happy life. The cleft may affect feeding, speech, hearing, appearance and the position of teeth but with treatment and support from the team the majority of children have very few long term problems.

## **What treatment and support is available?**

The Spires Cleft Team is made up of specialists from a variety of disciplines. The aim of treatment is for your child to be happy and confident. Nurses, Surgeons, Speech Therapists, Psychologists, Orthodontists, Maxillo-facial Surgeons and Ear, Nose and Throat Specialists will all work with you to achieve this. The cleft of the lip is usually closed at about 4 months of age and the palate at about 6 – 12 months of age.

## **What can I do now?**

The Fetal Scanning department (with your permission) will contact the clinical nurse specialist from the Spires Cleft Team and she will telephone you within 24 hours of that referral. This is to arrange a convenient meeting with you at either your home, local hospital or Salisbury hospital (whichever you feel is the best). She will then discuss your baby's future care and answer any questions. This is all carried out at your own pace and no question is too small.

***Please remember we are here to help.***

# The Spires Cleft Team

Professionals you may meet during the first year of your baby's life:

**Consultant Cleft/Plastic Surgeon**  
Adam Sawyer

**Lead Nurse**  
Nichola Hudson

**Clinical Nurse Specialist**  
Maureen Warren

**Lead Speech & Language Therapist**  
Ginette Phippen

**Clinical Psychologist**  
Stephanie Farrer

**Service Co-ordinator**  
Mary-Ann Brewer

If you need this information in another language or medium (audio, large print, etc) please contact the Customer Care Team on 0800 374208 email: [customer care@salisbury.nhs.uk](mailto:customer care@salisbury.nhs.uk).

You are entitled to a copy of any letter we write about you. Please ask if you want one when you come to the hospital.

The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email [patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk) if you would like a reference list.

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