Office for Genetics
and
Children with Special Health Care Needs

Cleft Lip Fact Sheet

What Is Cleft Lip?

- It is a birth defect that affects the upper lip
- Cleft- is a split or separation
- Clefts in the lips can vary from a small notch in the upper lip to a split that goes into the nose
- Clefts can be unilateral (on one side), or bilateral (on both sides)

What is the cause?

- The exact cause of Cleft Lip remains unknown
- There are (3) main factors that may contribute to an infant being born with Cleft Lip
  1. Inherited Characteristics- a single abnormality inherited from one or both parents
  2. Environmental-exposure to toxins
  3. Genetic syndrome – part of a group of abnormalities inherited from one or both parents.

Signs and Symptoms

- Separation in the upper lip that can extend into the nose
- Possible dental problems

Is there any treatment?

- Surgery for cleft lip is normally performed when the infant is between 6 weeks and 9 months old
- There may be feeding difficulties until the lip is repaired
- Sometimes speech therapy is needed even after the lip is repaired
Support Groups/Resources

- Kennedy Krieger Institute
  http://www.kennedykrieger.org
  443-923-9200

- March of Dimes
  http://www.marchofdimes.com
  1-410-546-2241

- Office for Genetics and Children with Special Health Care Needs
  http://fha.maryland.gov/genetics/bdris.cfm
  1-800-638-8864

- The Parents’ Place Of Maryland
  www.ppmd.org
  410-768-9100

- Wide Smiles Cleft Lip and Cleft Palate Resource
  www.widesmiles.org
  209-942-2812