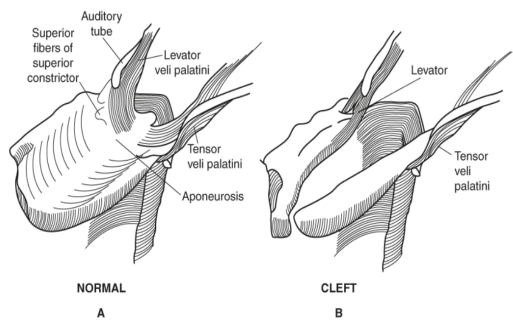


+ Cleft Palate Repair

Cleft Palate repair typically takes place between 7-15 months of age so that a child may start to develop speech properly. Timing will depend on the child's ability to spoon and cup feed, since bottle feeding after surgery can interfere with the healing process.

For wider clefts, our team uses the 2 stage method of cleft repair. This method gets the speech mechanism in place early and creates tension on the unrepaired portion of the cleft, narrowing it, so that the closure of the remaining portion is more easily accomplished.



Source: Lakhani AK: CURRENT Diagnosis & Treatment in Otolaryngology - Head & Neck Surgery, 3rd Edition; www.accesssurgery.com Copyright © The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. All rights reserved.

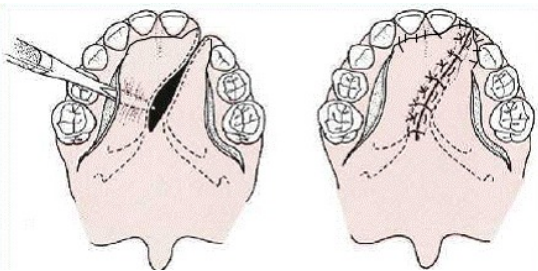
Palate Musculature

Speech is a result of the soft palate elevating up to the back of the throat to close off the mouth from the nose. This is done by a set of muscles known as the levator veli palatine and the tensor veli palatine muscles. As you can see from the pictures below, in a cleft palate these muscles are abnormally oriented and thus must be restored to their normal positions.



Stage 1: Repair of the Soft Palate

As you can see from the illustration, in the first stage the muscles are realigned from their abnormal position on the back of the hard palate to meet in the midline. This allows for the remaining gap to narrow.



Stage 2: Repair of the Hard Palate

The Second stage repair is typically done 3-4 months after the first. It involves elevating the mucosa from the underlying bone and bringing it together in the midline. Often times we will leave small incisions behind the teeth and pack them with something called surgiseal. Since these small incisions have bone behind them they will fill in on their own.

+ Post-operatively

After Surgery your child will:

- Stay in the hospital for one night
- Wear elbow restraints so they do not put hands in mouth/suck on thumb
- Not be allowed to use a pacifier or take a bottle
- Be on a pureed/liquid diet for 2 weeks and a soft diet for the next 2 weeks

In the Long Run

Just because these muscles are put back in normal position does not mean they will work properly and occasionally additional surgery is required at a later age to improve speech. For further information please see handout on velopharyngeal insufficiency.