

surfaces within the oral cavity but do not improve feeding efficiency or growth within the first year of life ([Jindal and Khan, 2013](#)).

Regardless of the feeding method used, the mother should begin feeding the infant as soon as possible, preferably after the initial nursery feeding. When maternal feeding is initiated early, the mother can help to determine the method best suited to her and the infant and can become adept in the technique before discharge from the hospital.

Preoperative Care

In preparation for surgical repair, parents may be taught to use alternative feeding systems (e.g., syringes) several days before surgery. For CL, many surgeons allow babies to return to their typical feeding system. However, for CP, some surgeons require that the child be off the bottle and drinking from an open cup or sippy cup.

Postoperative Care

The major efforts in the postoperative period are directed toward protecting the operative site. For CL, parents may be advised to apply petroleum jelly to the operative site for several days after surgery. For CL, CP, or CL/P, elbow immobilizers may be used to prevent the infant from rubbing or disturbing the suture line; they are applied immediately after surgery and may be used for 7 to 10 days. Some centers advocate using a syringe for feeding for 7 to 10 days after CL or CP repair. Adequate analgesia is required to relieve postoperative pain and to prevent restlessness. Feeding is resumed when tolerated. An upright or infant seat position is helpful in the immediate postoperative period (especially for infants who have difficulty handling secretions). Avoid the use of suction or other objects in the mouth, such as tongue depressors, thermometers, pacifiers, spoons, and straws.

The older infant or child may be discharged on a blenderized or soft diet, and parents are instructed to continue the diet until the surgeon directs them otherwise. Parents are cautioned against allowing the child to eat hard items (e.g., toast, hard cookies, and potato chips) that can damage the repaired palate.