

Most common feeding questions for the first year of life

Can babies with a cleft lip or palate breastfeed?



Babies with a cleft palate typically have trouble creating enough suction to pull milk from the breast or a regular baby bottle. Their main source of nutrition comes from a specialty bottle for the first year of life. The Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) will work with parents and the baby to find the right bottle fit. If the mother would like to, babies with cleft palates can breastfeed for “dessert” after a specialty bottle is given.

On the other hand, babies with a cleft lip only can breastfeed and bottle-feed normally unless there is a cleft involving the gum ridge.

Are solids appropriate with a cleft palate?



Yes! Progress to purees and soft solids as developmentally appropriate and when the child meets motor milestones such as head/neck and trunk control and grabbing objects and putting them to his/her mouth. This typically happens around six (6) months of age, just like a baby without a cleft. We recommend starting with purees via spoon, gradually increasing to more textured foods. Then around 10-12 months of age, begin offering small pieces of table foods. Avoid choking hazards.

Is it OK if milk or food comes out of a baby's nose?



Yes. This is common with a cleft palate and does not mean the baby is choking. Babies will typically cough and sneeze to clear their noses. There is no need to use a bulb syringe, as the nose cleans/clears itself.

Babies with cleft lip or palate are followed closely by our team’s SLP and RD throughout the first year. They normally check in with parents around the baby’s first month of life, sixth month of life, and prior to surgery.

Feel free to contact our team with any questions or concerns.