Alyeska Center for Facial Plastic Surgery & ENT

3831 Piper St, STE S433

Anchorage, Alaska 99508

Telephone: (907)561-1421 Fax: (907)561-0327

Welcome to our practice, and congratulations on your new baby! This packet is designed to give you some general information about what to expect when a baby is born with a cleft lip and/or palate. We are here to support you and provide information for you as you learn more about what a cleft lip and/or palate means for you and your baby.

As you reach your due date, here are some things to expect:

* Your baby will be seen by one of our doctors very shortly after birth. We will make sure that early team work starts to get you and your baby off to a good start. This may include working with a nurse or therapist to teach your baby to feed from a special bottle. Most babies with a cleft lip and/or palate cannot breastfeed because it is difficult for them to get a good seal around the nipple area. This is similar to trying to drink through a straw with a hole in the side of it – hard to do, despite your best effort! For this reason, an early priority is to work on getting good nutrition for the baby with a special bottle and using specialized feeding techniques.
* We make sure your baby is checked for any other medical conditions that need early attention. Although many babies with a cleft lip or palate have no other medical problems, we will work with your pediatrics team to check everything over. The earlier something is found or diagnosed, the sooner we can help.
* Babies with a cleft lip or palate will need surgery in order to close any clefts. Lip taping is often performed before surgery. We usually perform cleft lip repair surgery at 10 weeks of age, and cleft palate surgery at 12 months of age. Babies are in the hospital for 1 to 2 days after surgery to make sure they get good hydration and starting eating. Babies with a cleft palate will get ear tubes at the same time as closing of the cleft lip or palate. These ear tubes help compensate for Eustachian tube dysfunction, which occurs because of a cleft in the palate.
* As babies with a cleft lip or palate grow into older children and young adults, we will work with a team to make sure tooth alignment is as good as it can be. Sometimes, children who have permanent teeth coming in need extra bone in the area of a cleft. We can help with this by doing alveolar bone grafting around 9 years of age. Orthodontics may also be needed.
* An older teenager or an adult who was born with a cleft lip or palate may desire nose surgery when they are fully grown in order to help with nasal breathing or appearance. This is usually performed after 16 years of age.
* Throughout your babies’ development, we will monitor: speech, hearing, growth, and scarring to make sure your child is reaching their full potential. This is often done with a team of experts who work together on your child’s behalf.

We treat children and adults of all ages who have been born with cleft lips and palates. We look forward to being a resource and a help for you and your child.