



Cleft Palate: Causes, Symptoms, Treatment, and Prevention

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Description

Cleft palate is a birth defect that occurs when the roof of the mouth (palate) fails to form properly during fetal development. This can cause a split or opening in the palate that can range from a small notch to a complete separation of the palate into two halves. Cleft palate can also involve the lip and the gum.

Cleft palate is a relatively common birth defect, occurring in approximately 1 out of every 700 live births worldwide. It can cause difficulties with feeding, speaking, and hearing, as well as cosmetic and social problems. However, with early diagnosis and appropriate treatment, most children with cleft palate can lead normal, healthy lives.

Causes

The exact cause of cleft palate is not fully understood, but it is believed to be a combination of genetic and environmental factors. Some of the factors that may increase the risk of cleft palate include

Family history: Children born to parents who have had cleft palate are more likely to develop the condition.

Exposure to certain substances during pregnancy: Smoking, alcohol consumption, and some medications have been linked to an increased risk of cleft palate.

Nutritional deficiencies: A lack of folic acid, vitamin B6, and other nutrients during pregnancy may increase the risk of cleft palate.

Symptoms

The most obvious symptom of cleft palate is a split or opening in the roof of the mouth. Other symptoms may include

- Difficulty feeding in Babies with cleft palate may have trouble sucking and swallowing, which can lead to poor weight gain and malnutrition.
- Speech problems with cleft palate can affect the way a child's speech develops, leading to difficulties with articulation and pronunciation.
- Ear infections in children with cleft palate are more likely to develop ear infections, which can lead to hearing loss if left untreated.

- Dental problems with Cleft palate can cause problems with the development and positioning of teeth, leading to dental problems later in life.
- Social and psychological problems in children with cleft palate may experience teasing, bullying, and discrimination, which can lead to social and psychological problems.

Treatment

Treatment for cleft palate usually involves a team of healthcare professionals, including a pediatrician, a plastic surgeon, a speech therapist, and an audiologist. The goal of treatment is to repair the cleft and restore normal function and appearance as much as possible.

Surgery

The main treatment for cleft palate is surgery, which is usually performed when the child is between 6 and 12 months old. The surgery involves closing the split or opening in the palate and reconstructing the roof of the mouth.

Speech therapy

Children with cleft palate may need speech therapy to help them develop normal speech patterns. This may involve working with a speech therapist that specializes in cleft palate.

Hearing tests

Children with cleft palate are more likely to develop hearing problems, so regular hearing tests are important to detect any problems early.

Dental care

Children with cleft palate may need special dental care to address any issues with tooth development and positioning.

Prevention

There are several steps that women can take to reduce their risk of having a baby with cleft palate:

- Taking folic acid supplements before and during pregnancy can help reduce the risk of cleft palate and other birth defects.
- Smoking and alcohol consumption during pregnancy have been linked to an increased risk of cleft palate.
- Regular prenatal care can help identify and address any potential issues that may increase the risk of cleft palate.

Cleft palate is a common birth defect that can have significant impacts on a child's life. While the exact cause of cleft palate is not fully understood, there are several risk factors that have been identified, including genetic and environmental factors. Early diagnosis and appropriate treatment can help children with cleft palate lead normal, healthy lives. Treatment typically involves surgery, speech therapy, and regular monitoring of hearing and dental health. Women can take steps to reduce their risk of having a baby with cleft palate, such as taking folic acid supplements, avoiding smoking and alcohol, and getting regular prenatal care.

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