

Macrostomia - Information for Children and Parents



Children's Health Ireland
at Temple Street

What is macrostomia?

Macrostomia is the term given to describe a child born with an unusually wide mouth. It is very rare, affecting 1-2 children born in Ireland each year. It can also be called a transverse facial cleft or a Tessier cleft number 7.

What causes macrostomia?

Macrostomia is caused when a child's mouth and the underlying muscles do not join up correctly before they are born. It can affect one side or both sides of the mouth. It happens more often in boys than girls.

We do not know why macrostomia occurs and children with some rare genetic conditions may also have macrostomia. However, other family members are very unlikely to be affected. Please discuss with your family doctor or paediatrician if you have any concerns.

What are the effects of Macrostomia?

Macrostomia affects the cosmetic appearance of your child's mouth causing both sides to be different in size. This may cause some problems when you are feeding your child and they also may have some drooling. When your child is older, they may have problems with speaking clearly or have difficulty blowing bubbles/candles/balloons.

Why is surgery offered?

Surgery is offered to improve the function of the muscle surrounding their mouth and improve your child's appearance. It is offered at different age groups following an appointment with a Plastic Surgeon.

What is the care after surgery?

Surgery is usually planned as a day case procedure under a general anaesthetic. Absorbable stitches that do not need to be removed are used. Sometimes, special skin glue is also placed over the wound.

The wound is left exposed (no covering/dressing) and usually heals very well over a week or two.

General Advice:

- Give your child regular over-the-counter Paracetamol / Ibuprofen after their surgery. It is important to follow the instructions on the medicine labels.



- Give your child soft food for a few days after surgery, avoiding very hot, cold, spicy food for 48 hours.
- Your child should chew their food on the unaffected side of their mouth for several days after their surgery.
- It is important that your child does not pick or scratch at their wound. Depending on their age, you might find mittens useful if they are very young.
- Please contact your surgical team to seek advice if your child's wound becomes red, is oozing or your child develops a fever.
- Begin massaging your child's wound 3 weeks after surgery to help the scar settle and soften. Your child's surgical team will advise you on this.
- You will be given a follow up clinic appointment for 3 months after your child's surgery.

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Version: 1

Approval Date: February 2022

Review Date: February 2025

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