INDICATIONS FOR A PHARYNGEAL FLAP

Despite an adequate palate repair, a small number of children may have difficulty with their speech. Typically, the soft palate and pharyngeal muscles work together to form a seal, which closes off the mouth from the nose. This prevents air from escaping through the nose during speech. When the muscles are not functioning properly, air can leak out through the nose during speech. This is called velopharyngeal insufficiency, or VPI.

ABOUT THE SURGERY

A pharyngeal flap is a surgical procedure to correct or enhance the quality of speech. This is usually done between the ages of 4-6 years of age. Lining and muscle tissue are transferred from the back of the throat (pharynx) to the palate in order to narrow the nasal opening. This typically enables a more normal sounding voice and improves communication skills.

LENGTH OF SURGERY AND HOSPITAL STAY

The operation usually takes 2 hours and the hospital stay for most children is 1-2 days. Children are closely monitored for the first 24 hours after surgery in the ICU. Nasal tubes are placed to help with breathing as swelling occurs. The tubes are removed the day after surgery. The swelling and nasal blockage may cause mild discomfort and snoring, which gradually resolves.

PAIN MANAGEMENT

Mild to moderate pain is expected with the procedure. During your child’s hospitalization, the pediatric pain team will work to ensure your child’s comfort. A prescription for oral pain medication will be given at the time of discharge. For safety, the medication dose is based on your child’s weight and should be given as instructed.
DIET
In the hospital, your child will receive IV fluids until liquids and soft food can be taken comfortably by mouth. A soft diet may be offered, including foods pureed in a blender, or foods mashed with a fork. Avoid breads, soft cheeses and peanut butter, as they may stick to the roof of the mouth. **A STRAW should not be used for 2 weeks.**

SOFT DIET GUIDELINES FOLLOWING A PPF/FURLOW
1st 7-10 days...very soft diet (ie milkshakes, yogurt, scrambled eggs, pureed fruits, pureed vegetables, strained oatmeal, thinned mashed potatoes, pureed or strained soups, melted ice cream, pudding etc)

2nd 7-10 days ...soft diet (i.e french toast, pancakes, muffins, canned fruits, bananas, tender meats/fish, pasta)

Do not give any hard foods such as: chips, pretzels, breadsticks, hard candy, nuts, seeds, fresh fruits and dried fruits.

ACTIVITY
Your child may return to school and resume normal activities when ready. Your child may snore after the surgery, which is normal, and generally improves as the swelling diminishes. You may notice an improvement in speech during the first week. Speech therapy can begin 4-6 weeks after surgery.

FOLLOW-UP APPOINTMENT
After surgery call 443-997-9466 to make a follow up visit in the Cleft Clinic 4-6 weeks following surgery.

CONCERNS/ CONTACT NUMBERS
During office hours, call 410-955-9475 or 443-997-9466 for persistent fever (greater than 101 degrees), excessive drainage or bleeding, difficulty breathing, difficulty eating or food refusal, excessive crying, irritability or complaints of pain. Kim Seifert, R.N. (kseifert@jhmi.edu) is typically available to review non-urgent questions or concerns.

After office hours, call 410-955-6070 and ask for the resident on call for plastic surgery to be paged. In the event of an emergency, call 911.