



Health and  
Social Care

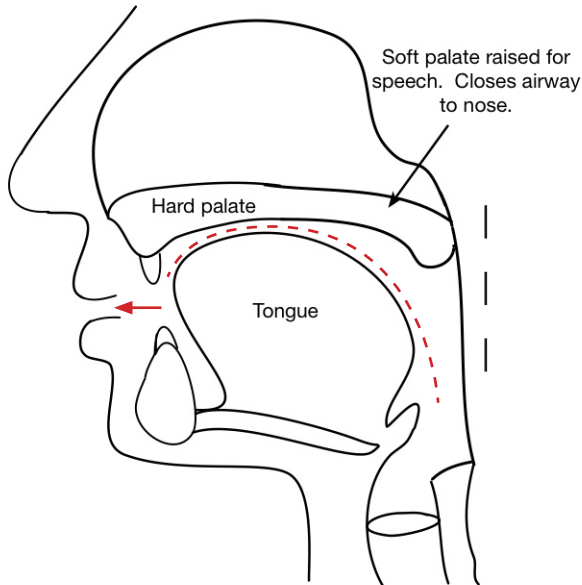


# How to help your child's speech after a pharyngoplasty

Speech and Language Therapy

## What did the surgery achieve?

Your child's soft palate was unable to lift up effectively to seal off their nose from their throat. The recent operation aimed to reduce how far the palate needs to move.



With kind permission to use image from Cindy Williams, The Spires Cleft Centre

## What does this mean for my child?

The soft palate lifts up and down to touch the back of the throat. This creates a total seal between the mouth and the nose.

When the soft palate lifts, the air from our lungs is directed through our mouths. We then use our tongue, lips and teeth to change this air into various shapes to make different speech sounds.

The soft palate also lifts when we swallow. This means food/drink does not leak through our nose.

## How will my child sound after the surgery?

You might notice a significant change in your child's speech immediately after the operation. They might even sound congested. This should resolve as the swelling reduces.

Their tone of voice may start to sound less 'nasally' and their consonants will have more power.

## When can I start speech therapy?

Not all children who have had a pharyngoplasty require speech therapy. Your Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) will tell you if some sessions might be helpful.

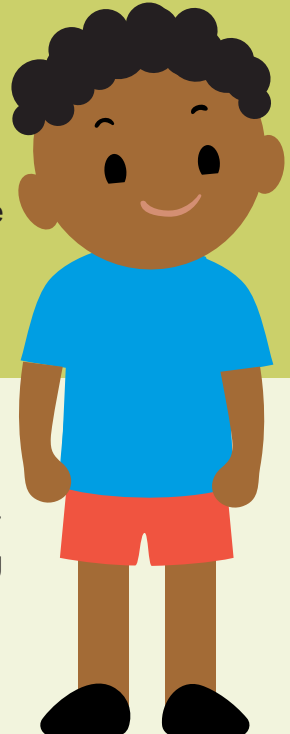
If your child was having speech therapy before the operation, as soon as your child is well enough, you can start practising again. Your SLT will advise you on which sounds to start with.

## How can I help my child?

Encourage your child to continue with their practice activities as advised by your SLT. Reassure them that it might take a little bit of time before you hear a difference after their operation.

It will help to say new sounds gently rather than force a lot of air through with pressure.

Children benefit from specific praise. Keep encouraging them with detailed feedback, eg. "Your talking is getting clearer and clearer everyday" / "That sound really popped out of your lips" / "I can see you really thinking about sending the air through your mouth" etc.



## Who can I contact if I am worried or have a question?

If you have any concerns or questions, you can call the Cleft Co-ordinator, Pamela Larmour, on 07385 430707. You can also email her on [pamela.larmour@belfasttrust.hscni.net](mailto:pamela.larmour@belfasttrust.hscni.net)

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