

## **A MESSAGE FOR CLEFT PATIENTS AND THEIR PARENTS FROM THE CLEFT TEAMS IN THE UK AND IRELAND**

The corona virus epidemic means that all cleft operations and face-to-face cleft clinics in the United Kingdom and Ireland have been delayed until the crisis is over. We appreciate that it might be difficult for you as parents and patients to wait for surgery but we believe that overall this is the safest thing to do.

While we do not think that a 3-4 month delay in cleft lip or cleft palate repair will have a big effect on your child's results in their later life, babies who have their cleft palate surgery after one year of age may need more speech therapy.

Cleft surgery will start again after the coronavirus epidemic is under control. All cleft teams have waiting lists for surgery and will know which patients need their operations first. Your cleft team will be in contact with you about this when surgery starts again.

If a child has a delay to bone grafting, we do not think this will affect the outcome of this surgery.

If you or your child is undergoing brace treatment it is important to keep your mouth and appliance clean. Sugary food and fizzy drinks should be avoided. This will prevent damage to the teeth including marks on the teeth that may last forever. This is very important at this time where there might be a long wait for the next appointment. If you have any problems with your braces please contact the cleft orthodontist treating you.

Evidence about coronavirus is growing each day. At the moment, there is not enough evidence to say whether or not a child born with a cleft lip or cleft palate is at higher risk than other children from the coronavirus.

We know that this is a difficult time and there is a lot of change. It is normal to feel scared or worried when there is so much change. It is important to look after yourself and your family during this time.

You can find advice on mental health and wellbeing and coronavirus at:  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-the-public-on-the-mental-health-and-wellbeing-aspects-of-coronavirus-covid-19](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-the-public-on-the-mental-health-and-wellbeing-aspects-of-coronavirus-covid-19)

For advice on talking to children about coronavirus visit: [www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/bps-highlights-importance-talking-children-about-coronavirus](https://www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/bps-highlights-importance-talking-children-about-coronavirus)

For advice on what children can understand about being sick at different ages and stages, and how they can be helped to understand coronavirus, visit [www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/advice-talking-children-about-illness](https://www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/advice-talking-children-about-illness).