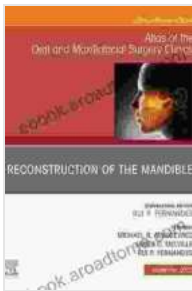


Management of the Cleft Patient: An Issue of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery

Cleft lip and palate are common birth defects that can have a significant impact on a child's appearance, speech, and oral health. The management of these defects requires a team of specialists, including oral and maxillofacial surgeons, plastic surgeons, orthodontists, and speech therapists.



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Surgical Treatment

The primary goal of surgical treatment for cleft lip and palate is to restore normal function and appearance. This can be achieved through a variety of techniques, depending on the severity of the defect.

- **Cleft lip repair:** This is typically performed within the first few months of life. The surgeon will make an incision along the cleft and then

suture the two sides of the lip together.

- **Cleft palate repair:** This is typically performed between 6 and 12 months of age. The surgeon will make an incision in the roof of the mouth and then suture the two sides of the palate together.
- **Alveolar bone grafting:** This is a procedure that is sometimes performed to close a gap in the alveolar ridge (the bone that supports the teeth). The surgeon will take a piece of bone from another part of the body and graft it into the gap.
- **Orthodontic treatment:** This is often necessary to correct any misalignment of the teeth and jaws that can occur as a result of cleft lip and palate. Orthodontic treatment can be started once the child has all of their permanent teeth.

Non-Surgical Treatment

In addition to surgery, there are a number of non-surgical treatments that can be used to manage cleft lip and palate. These include:

- **Speech therapy:** This can help children with cleft palate to develop clear speech. Speech therapy can be started as early as 6 months of age.
- **Feeding therapy:** This can help children with cleft lip and palate to learn how to eat and drink safely. Feeding therapy can be started as early as birth.
- **Nasal prosthetics:** These are devices that can be placed in the nose to help improve breathing and speech. Nasal prosthetics can be used in children and adults.

Long-Term Care

Children with cleft lip and palate will need to be followed by a team of specialists throughout their lives. This team will monitor the child's growth and development, and provide any necessary treatment. Long-term care may include:

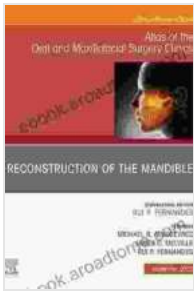
- **Regular checkups:** These will allow the child's doctor to monitor their progress and make sure that they are developing normally.
- **Additional surgeries:** Some children may need additional surgeries to correct any problems that develop over time. These surgeries may include revision surgery to improve the appearance of the lip or palate, or orthognathic surgery to correct any misalignment of the jaws.
- **Orthodontic treatment:** Orthodontic treatment may be needed to correct any misalignment of the teeth and jaws that can occur as a result of cleft lip and palate. Orthodontic treatment can be started once the child has all of their permanent teeth.
- **Speech therapy:** Speech therapy may be needed to help children with cleft palate develop clear speech. Speech therapy can be continued as long as necessary.

The management of cleft lip and palate is a complex process that requires a team of specialists. With proper care, children with these defects can live full and healthy lives.

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