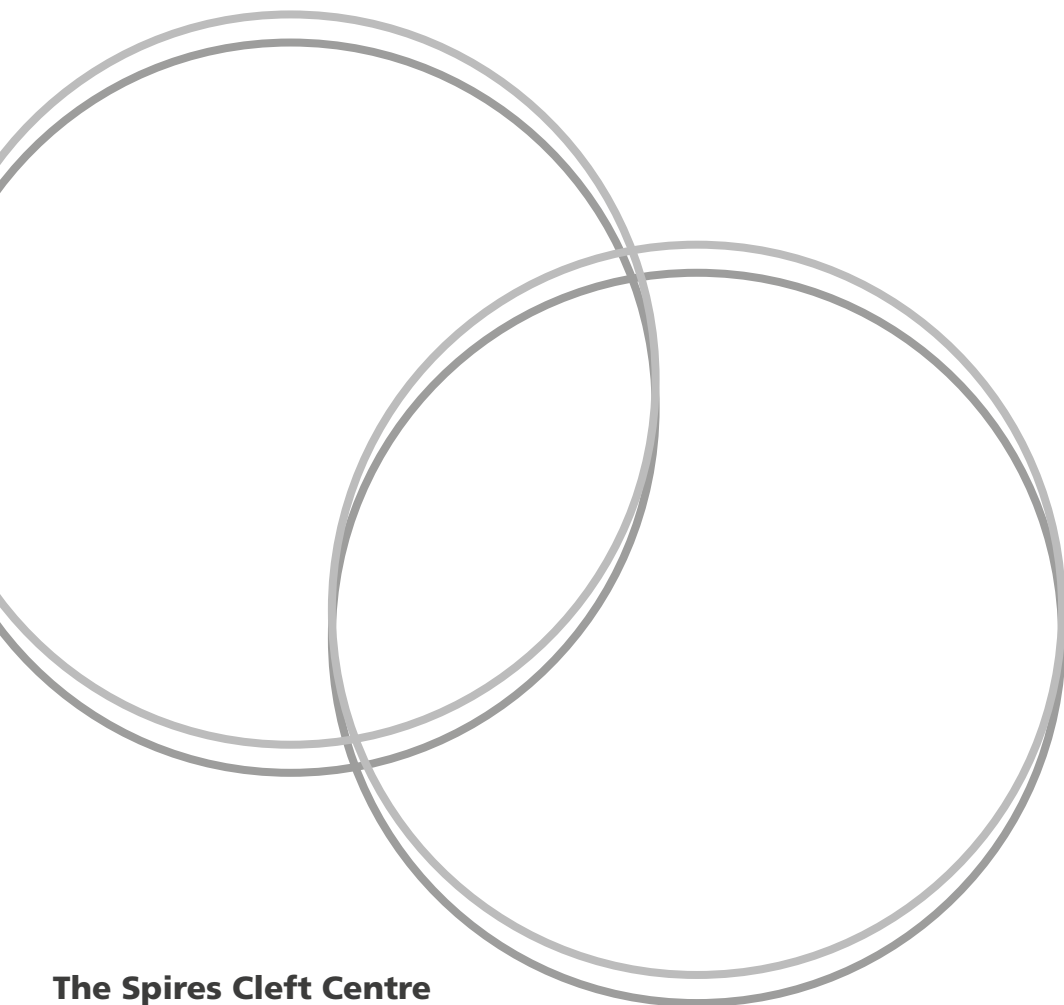




Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Speech prosthetics

Information for patients



The Spires Cleft Centre

What is a speech prosthesis?

A speech prosthesis is a removable plastic plate that fits into your mouth and is secured to some of your upper teeth by metal clips. It starts at the front of your mouth and extends over the roof of your mouth.

Why do I need a speech prosthesis?

If you have nasal sounding speech a speech prosthesis can be used to reduce airflow down your nose whilst you are talking. This can help to make your speech stronger, louder and clearer. Usually speech therapy will not help to reduce the nasal sound in your speech.

We recommend a speech prosthesis when other options (such as surgery) have failed or are not advisable for medical or other reasons.

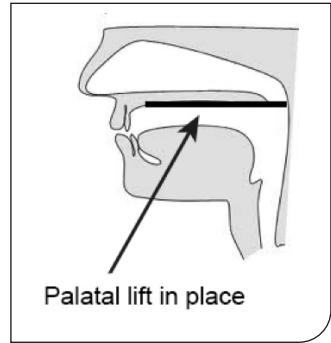
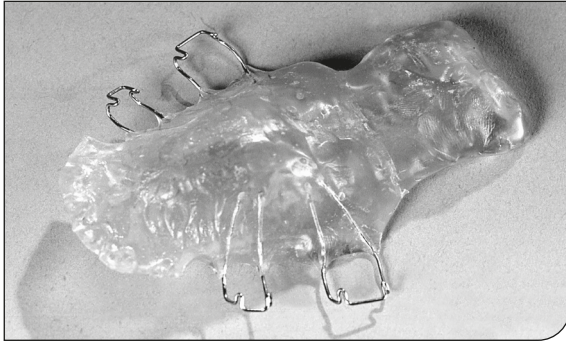
Sometimes, when surgery is being considered as an option to improve nasal speech, a prosthesis may be used on a trial basis to see how successful an operation might be. There are two types of speech prosthesis:

- palatal lift
- velopharyngeal obturator.

Both can be effective in reducing airflow down your nose whilst talking. Following careful assessment, the team will decide which is most appropriate for you.

Palatal lift appliance

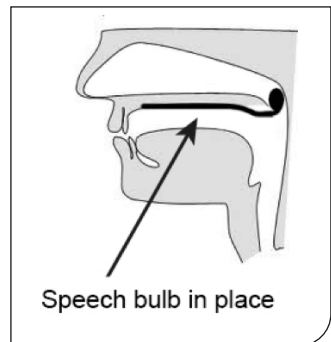
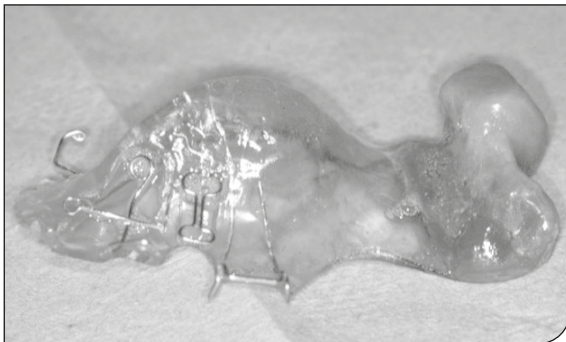
The plastic plate (shown below) extends backwards to hold the soft palate (soft part of the roof of the mouth) in an upwards position. This supports better closure of the soft plate against the back of the throat, helping increase pressure in the mouth, which is needed to make clear speech sounds.



Images courtesy of UCL Health Creatives.

Velopharyngeal obturator (speech bulb)

The plastic plate (shown below) extends behind the soft palate (soft part of the roof of the mouth), finishing in a ball. This fills the gap where unwanted air escapes up into the nose, helping increase pressure in the mouth, which is needed to make clear speech sounds.



Images courtesy of UCL Health Creatives.

How is a speech prosthesis made?

You will need to be assessed by the Consultant Restorative Dentist, who will take a dental impression of your top teeth and palate. This is used to make a dental mould.

A plastic plate is then made, to fit exactly over the mould of the palate. The metal clips are attached to this plate. These are for clipping on to some of your teeth, to keep the prosthesis in place.

How is the speech prosthesis fitted?

The fitting process usually takes several visits to the Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery department, over a period of some weeks.

To help with the fitting process, your Speech and Language Therapist or Consultant Restorative Dentist might suggest you have a nasendoscopy. This involves a small tube, with a tiny camera on the end, being put into your nose to look at the soft palate and walls of your throat while you speak.

This is used to make sure the prosthesis fits well. It won't be required at every fitting.

How long will it take for me to get used to it?

The prosthesis may be a little uncomfortable for a few days, but if you continue to wear it as much as possible during the day it should feel comfortable within a week.

If it is still causing discomfort after this time, come back to the Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery department for reassessment, but in the meantime try to keep wearing the prosthesis.

Do I need to wear it when I sleep?

No. You can put it in first thing in the morning and take it out before going to bed.

Can I eat and drink with it in place?

Some people can eat with the speech prosthesis in place, others find it a little difficult and prefer to take it out to eat. Most people manage to drink with it in place.

Will it affect my breathing?

No. A well-fitted plate should not affect your breathing. You might feel like your nose is a bit blocked up.

Will I need speech therapy?

The Speech and Language Therapist will assess and measure your speech before treatment and as part of the final fitting of the prosthesis. If you still have problems with producing certain speech sounds we will arrange for the Speech and Language Therapist to support you with therapy, to make changes to your problem sounds.

How can I get more information?

If you have any questions, please contact one of the Specialist Speech and Language Therapists within the Cleft Team:

Telephone: 01865 234 842 or 01865 231 519
(9.00am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday)

Email: www.spirecentre.nhs.uk

Alternatively contact the Cleft Secretaries:

Telephone: 01865 226 965 or 01865 234 339
(9.00am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday)

If you have any problems with your appliance, please contact the Spires Cleft Centre, asking for the Speech Appliance Service:

Telephone: 01865 234 252
(8.00am to 4.00pm, Monday to Friday)

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

Author: Specialist Cleft SLTO

Adapted from leaflets produced by Great Ormond Street Hospital, 2010 and The Welsh Cleft Centre for Cleft Lip and Palate, 2013

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Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

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