

Cleft palate and cleft lip

If your baby is born with a cleft palate or cleft lip, talk with a lactation consultant in the hospital. Breast milk is still best for your baby's health.

Cleft palate and cleft lip are some of the most common birth defects that happen as a baby is developing in the [womb](#). A cleft, or opening, in either the palate or lip can happen together or separately and both can be corrected through surgery. Both conditions can prevent babies from forming a good seal around the nipple and areola with his or her mouth, or effectively remove milk from the breast. A mother can try different breastfeeding positions and use her thumb or breast to help fill in the opening left by the lip to form a seal around the breast.

Right after birth, a mother whose baby has a cleft palate can try to breastfeed her baby. She can also start expressing her milk right away to keep up her supply. Even if her baby can't latch on well to her breast, the baby can be fed breast milk by cup. In some hospitals, babies with cleft palate are fitted with a mouthpiece called an obturator that fits into the cleft and seals it for easier feeding. The baby should be able to exclusively breastfeed after his or her surgery.