



Could it be a Cleft Palate?

Up to **50%** of clefts involve the palate only, varying in shape and size.



Cleft of the Hard & Soft Palate



Cleft of the Soft Palate



Wide 'U' shaped Cleft Palate



Sub Mucous Cleft Palate

Presenting signs & symptoms

Nasal regurgitation during or after feeds

Clicking sounds during feeds

Continued difficulty latching at breast

Tiring during feeds

Prolonged feeds

Faltering growth

Bifid Uvula

Increased work of breathing associated with above

Always visualise the palate

Best practice is to use a tongue depressor and torch, as per RCPCH guidelines.



The Royal College of Paediatric and Child Health (2014)
"Palate Examination: Identification of Cleft Palate in the Newborn."

Incidence and Delayed Detection

Diagnosis 24 hours after birth is classified as delayed

Annually, 10-20% of babies receive a delayed diagnosis of a cleft palate

18% of cleft palates are diagnosed between 1 week and 6 months of age

The impact of a delayed detection for families can be devastating.

Cleft Registry and Audit Network Database (2023) "Annual Report."

Cleft Specialist Nurses

Professionals supporting infant feeding are ideally placed to examine an infant's palate as part of their own routine assessments. This additional contact provides opportunities to identify cleft palates that have been missed on the NIPE examinations and by other health care professionals. We aim to offer greater support through raising awareness and training, ultimately preventing a delayed diagnosis.

Useful resources



RCPCH Best Practice Guidelines
Free 90 minute online course



How to Refer

If a cleft is identified, please phone your local Cleft Team as soon as possible using the information on this QR code

Contact your local cleft nursing team for training and advice

