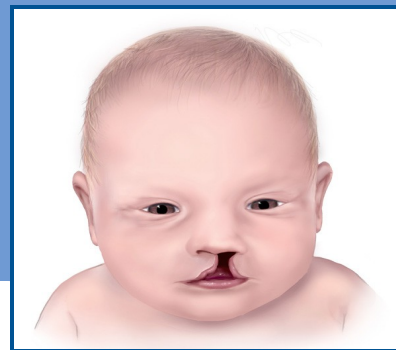


# Birth Defect Series: Cleft Lip and Palate



**What:** A cleft lip and/or palate is a split in the roof of the mouth or the lip. These conditions can occur when the mouth and lip develops. There are various levels of severity. Clefing can involve a small notch in the lip or can involve the entire palate and nose. Clefts involving the upper lip and palate are the most common birth defects.

**Why:** Development of the head and face occurs very early in the pregnancy. The face develops in two halves and joins together to form the lips and mouth. If the upper lip or palate do not join correctly a notch can remain at birth. While there is no known cause of clefts, there are several risk factors that can increase the chance of babies having oral clefts. Women who smoke, have diabetes, or take certain medications are more likely to have babies with oral clefts.

**When:** Some clefts can be detected by ultrasound before your baby is born. Other clefts may be found during your baby's first exam.

**How:** Oral clefts can affect breathing, eating, speech development and hearing. Treatments for oral clefts usually involve surgery during the first year. Other therapies may be needed to improve speech and correct dental problems.

Image courtesy of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities.

## Resources for Illinois Families

### Adverse Pregnancy Outcomes Reporting System

[http://www.dph.illinois.gov/  
data-statistics/epidemiology/  
apors](http://www.dph.illinois.gov/data-statistics/epidemiology/apors)

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/  
birthdefects/cleftlip.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects/cleftlip.html)

### Cleft Palate Foundation

<http://www.cleftline.org/>

### March of Dimes

[http://  
www.marchofdimes.org/  
complications/cleft-lip-and-  
cleft-palate.aspx](http://www.marchofdimes.org/complications/cleft-lip-and-cleft-palate.aspx)

**And visit your  
doctor for more  
information.**

