

**Office for Genetics  
and  
Children with Special Health Care Needs**

**Cleft Lip Fact Sheet**

**What Is Cleft Lip?**

- It is a birth defect that affects the upper lip
- Cleft- is a split or separation
- Clefts in the lips can vary from a small notch in the upper lip to a split that goes into the nose
- Clefts can be unilateral (on one side), or bilateral (on both sides)

**What is the cause?**

- The exact cause of Cleft Lip remains unknown
- There are (3) main factors that may contribute to an infant being born with Cleft Lip
  1. Inherited Characteristics- a single abnormality inherited from one or both parents
  2. Environmental-exposure to toxins
  3. Genetic syndrome – part of a group of abnormalities inherited from one or both parents.

**Signs and Symptoms**

- Separation in the upper lip that can extend into the nose
- Possible dental problems

**Is there any treatment?**

- Surgery for cleft lip is normally performed when the infant is between 6 weeks and 9 months old
- There may be feeding difficulties until the lip is repaired
- Sometimes speech therapy is needed even after the lip is repaired

## Support Groups/Resources

- Kennedy Krieger Institute  
<http://www.kennedykrieger.org>  
443-923-9200
- March of Dimes  
<http://www.marchofdimes.com>  
1-410-546-2241
- Office for Genetics and Children with Special Health Care Needs  
<http://fha.maryland.gov/genetics/bdris.cfm>  
1-800-638-8864
- The Parents' Place Of Maryland  
[www.ppm.org](http://www.ppm.org)  
410- 768-9100
- Wide Smiles Cleft Lip and Cleft Palate Resource  
[www.widesmiles.org](http://www.widesmiles.org)  
209-942-2812