

Providing Care for Cleft Lip and Palate at Shriners Hospitals for Children

Cleft lip and palate deformities occur when the tissue that forms the upper lip and roof of the mouth fail to join together before birth. Babies may be born with a cleft lip only, a cleft palate only, or both. No two facial clefts are ever the same.

Clefts of the lip and palate, which vary in size because the lips and palate develop at different times, are complex conditions that affect the ability to breathe, speak, hear and eat properly. The condition can also impact patients' appearance and self-esteem. Cleft lip and palate is corrected by reconstructive surgery in conjunction with multidisciplinary therapies.

The condition occurs in approximately one of every 600 live births. In fact, facial clefts are one of the most common birth defects in the U.S. Despite the frequency of its occurrence, and the severity of the deformities, complete care for patients with cleft lip and palate can be difficult to obtain. For this reason, Shriners Hospitals for Children® added cleft lip and palate to the health care system's treatment disciplines.

A Positive Outcome

At Shriners Hospitals for Children, patients with a cleft lip and/or palate are treated by a multidisciplinary team of experts, who work together to solve the many issues associated with this complex condition. Each patient's unique treatment plan may include surgery, orthodontics, hearing, speech and psychological therapies, along with specialized support. The goal of our treatment program is to help each child achieve optimal function, improve their facial appearance to the fullest extent possible, and improve their self-esteem.

Our medical experts also emphasize family-centered care. Patients and families are treated as members of the team and are invited to be active participants in the treatment planning and decision making process. Our goal is to foster and maximize the social, physical, and psychological development of our patients.

Overcoming Challenges



Yana is one patient who has benefited from the expertise in cleft lip and palate care available at Shriners Hospitals for Children. She was born with a severe case of cleft lip and palate, and finding the care she required proved difficult - early attempts of physicians to address Yana's condition were unsuccessful.

When she was 13, she was referred to the cleft lip and palate team at Shriners Hospitals for Children - Shreveport. Under the expert care of Dr. G.E. Ghali, Yana underwent a series of operations involving her palate, nose, teeth, jaw and cheekbones.

"Overall, my speech went from about 4 to a 10 in being able to understand it," Yana said. "And the team was always willing to go out of their way to help make me comfortable."

With vastly improved speech, Yana began participating in public speaking events. She earned a spot in a Texas state competition and took first place, and then went on to compete and win first place in a national tournament in Georgia, where she spoke of people who have fought in the face of adversity, told of her own life experiences, and discussed the role of faith as she looks toward a bright future.

Cleft lip and palate is a common and serious condition. Shriners Hospitals for Children is committed to improving care for children with this condition through a comprehensive, coordinated program of clinical excellence, medical education, and research.

Care for cleft lip and palate is currently available at the nine Shriners Hospitals for Children locations. Services may vary at different locations. For more information, please visit shrinershospitalsforchildren.org.



SHRINERS HOSPITALS FOR CHILDREN IN THESE LOCATIONS CURRENTLY OFFER CARE FOR CLEFT LIP AND PALATE:

Boston, Massachusetts

Chicago, Illinois

Cincinnati, Ohio

Houston, Texas

Los Angeles, California

Portland, Oregon

Sacramento, California

Shreveport, Louisiana

Springfield, Massachusetts



Shriners Hospitals
for Children®