



This transition leaflet is part of a series aimed at young people and is produced by the North West Cleft Lip and Palate Network



This leaflet only gives general information. You must always discuss your treatment with the appropriate member of staff. Do not rely on this leaflet alone for information about your treatment. This information can be made available in other languages and formats if requested.

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Cleft Department

How do I  
feel about  
my cleft?



## Learning about your cleft

Young people tell us that there can be both good and bad things about growing up with a cleft. Learning about your cleft, and making sense of what it means to you, is important as you grow up. This gives you the chance to understand and talk about how your cleft affects you now and in the future, as well as when you were younger. It might help you feel more confident when talking to other people about it. You can also become more involved in making decisions about any treatment you might need or choose to have in the future.

You may have already read some general information about “What is a cleft?” on the CLAPA website or our Network website (See the “Where can I find more information” leaflet). You might already know lots about your cleft. But there may also be information you can’t remember or don’t understand. If you have any questions, you may find it helpful to talk to your parents, carers, GP or the Cleft Team.

You might want to know:

- Is there a specific name for my type of cleft?
- How does my cleft affect me and my body?
- Will my cleft change as I get older? Will it get better or worse?
- What treatment have I had?
- What treatment am I still to have, and when will I have it?
- What difference will the treatment make? What won’t change?
- Is there optional treatment that I might choose to have (or not) in the future?
- Is there anything else I might want to know?

You might have already seen photographs of yourself when you were a baby, or around the time of any treatment(s) you have had. You might ask your parent or carers, GP, or the Cleft Team to look at and talk about any other photographs or records they have if you would like to. You can record this information in our treatment record.

## Talking to others confidently about your cleft

If you look or sound different because of your cleft, it is natural that other people may be curious about you. Their questions, looks or comments might make you feel uncomfortable or self-conscious.

The first step to feeling confident talking to others is to understand as much as you can about your cleft. You can decide what phrases or words you might want to use when talking to others.

There are lots of different ways that you might choose to talk to others about your cleft. The *Changing Faces* website has some helpful tips about how you might like to do this:

**Explain** – to help them understand

**Reassure** – give information to explain it’s OK

**Distract** – talk about something else if you’d prefer

**Humour** – your sense of humour might help lighten the situation

**Assertive** – take control of the situation



If you are trying out a new strategy, it might take some practice before it feels easy to you. You might choose to talk to your friends, parent or carers, teachers, or other people you trust for support and advice about this.

You can also talk with the Clinical Psychologist on our team. They can offer advice or support about how it feels talking with others about your cleft. They can also support you in practicing these or other techniques for talking and feeling confident about your cleft.

See the “Where can I find more info?” leaflet in this pack for the contact details for *Changing Faces* and the Cleft Team.

## Managing bullying

- **What is bullying?**

Bullying is anything done to deliberately upset, humiliate or hurt you by the same person or group of people. It can include saying unkind words, doing hurtful things, or being left out.

Bullying can happen anywhere: at home, school, in public places, or on your phone, computer or social networking sites.

Some young people tell us that they experience bullying about their cleft. But it is important to remember that **bullying is not your fault**.

If you are being bullied, it is normal to feel very upset, worried, angry, embarrassed, humiliated or sad about it. You might not be sure what to do or who to tell about it.

- **If you are being bullied**

The most important thing to do is to **tell someone about it**.

You might choose to talk to your friends, parent or carers, teachers, or other people you trust for support and advice. You can also speak with the Clinical Psychologist on our team. They can offer support about how bullying is affecting your feelings. You can also think about ways you can manage bullying.

See the “Where can I find more info?” leaflet in this pack for the contact details of the Cleft Team.

## Ten top tips

1. **Tell someone.**
2. Remember it's not your fault.
3. Ask them to stop.
4. Keep calm- don't get angry or hit back.
5. Walk away.
6. Get support from your friends.
7. Keep safe.
8. Make a record of when it happens.
9. Report it to the school.
10. Report it to the police.

## Websites for more information

[www.bullying.co.uk](http://www.bullying.co.uk)

[www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)

[www.childline.org.uk/bullying](http://www.childline.org.uk/bullying)

[www.nhs.uk/livewell/bullying/pages/antibullyinghelp.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/bullying/pages/antibullyinghelp.aspx)