

# **Craniofacial Disorders**

## **What is it?**

Craniofacial refers to any problem with the skeleton, base of the skull and the face. Craniofacial also refers to the premature fusion of the skull bones. This can affect the development of the brain and how the child will grow. A change in one system will influence the function or require change in other systems of the body.

## **What are the symptoms?**

Children with craniofacial disorders have strict limitations with their eating and speech skills.

Cleft lip or Cleft palate –One of the most common craniofacial disorders, cleft lip is seen in one in seven hundred live births in the United States. A cleft lip is a separation of the two sides of the lip. The separation often includes the bones of the upper jaw and/or upper gum and deformities in the lip, muscles around the lip and nose. Sometimes the cleft lip is associated with a cleft palate, an opening in the roof of the mouth where the two sides of the palate did not fuse, or join together, when the unborn was developing. Cleft lip and cleft palate can occur on one side (unilateral cleft lip and/or palate), or on both sides (bilateral cleft lip and/or palate). Because the lip and the palate develop separately, it is possible for the child to have both a cleft lip and a cleft palate.

Micrognathia – Small, recessed lower jaw. The tongue is usually pulled to the back of the mouth interfering with the infant's ability to breathe.

Short lingual frenulum – A child whose tongue movement is restricted by a short band of tissue from the front of the tongue to the floor of the mouth. This is sometimes referred to as a tongue tie.

## **How is it treated?**

Speech Pathologists understand the impact on speech development and various feeding skills such as sucking, swallowing and chewing, and help the family. A child with craniofacial disorders requires the coordinated services of a team of specialists who provide the following services: corrective surgery, dental/orthodontic care, speech therapy, social workers and other forms of non-surgical support to help the family. Therapists at Pediatric Therapy Center (PTC) work jointly with all professionals and the families to help coordinate your child's care.