



The National Cleft Surgical  
Service for Scotland

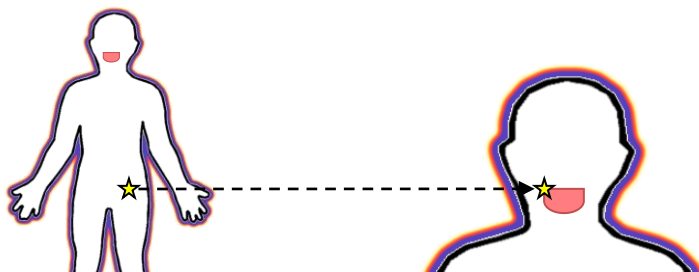


## So... you're having an **Alveolar Bone Graft (ABG)?**

Everything you need to know-  
A guide for children

## What is an Alveolar Bone Graft?

A bone graft is an operation where a surgeon moves a bit of bone to a different place. In an Alveolar Bone Graft (ABG for short), a surgeon takes a small bit of **bone out of your hip**, and **puts it in your gum**. 'Alveolar' just means gum.



Bone is taken from your hip...

...and put into your gum.

## Why do I need an ABG?

Lots of children born with a gap (called a 'cleft') in their lip or palate also have a **gap in their gum**. You might be able to see this, or feel it with your tongue.

This gap can be a problem for some of your adult teeth, as they need gum to grow into. **The ABG closes the gap in the gum** so your teeth can grow through. If you have a hole between your mouth and nose, it may help close this too.

## When will I have my ABG?

The best time for an ABG is **different for every child**. But it usually happens between 7 to 11 years old, or when you get your front adult teeth.



The ABG will close the gap in your gum!

You will find out when you need your ABG at a hospital appointment. After this, your adult(s) will get a letter saying when your ABG is. You can write this on the back page to remind you.

Before your ABG, you need to **keep your teeth very clean!** Sometimes, an orthodontist (a type of dentist) will put a **metal or plastic 'brace'** on your teeth to make your ABG easier. This is usually worn for a few months before and after your ABG. If you have speech therapy, it may stop for a bit.

## Where will my ABG happen?



The giant iPads in the lobby

Your ABG will happen in the Royal Hospital for Children, which is in **Glasgow**. There are lots of fun things here- even giant iPads in the lobby, and a cinema!



Your room (and TV!) may be like this

When you have your ABG, you will stay in a place called Ward 3B. This is usually just for 1 or 2 nights. **You normally have your own room.**

To help you feel at home, **an adult can stay in a bed next to you.** You can also bring a few toys, or borrow some from the play team on the ward.

To find out more about the hospital, you can **visit the website** with your adult(s), or **write down questions** for your adult(s) to ask the nurses.

## **What happens once I'm in hospital?**

When you go to hospital, you will go straight to Ward 3B. The nurses will tell you how long you have to wait until your ABG.

You're **not allowed to eat for a few hours** before your ABG. The nurses will say when this starts.

Keeping busy can help if you are hungry or worried. To make your stay fun, the play team have **toys and games**, and **most rooms have TVs (with games on!).**



You're not allowed to eat for a few hours before your ABG

You will also have a special spray or cream put on the back of your hand. It makes the skin so numb you can't feel it! This lets the nurses put a **tiny tube in your hand** to give you medicine.

You can also choose **which side of your hip you want your scar on**. The scar will be there forever, but fades over time. It will only be 3 to 5cm long, and is easily covered by underwear.

## What happens when the wait is over?



The sleep doctors' room has lots of machines in it

When you are ready, you will walk (or ride in a bed!) to a room with lots of machines in it. Here, the sleep doctors will give you some medicine. It will put you in a **very deep sleep**.

You can take the medicine either **through a mask** (which some people say smells like rubber or felt tip pens), **or through the tube in your hand**. An adult can be with you, if you like.

The medicine makes your eyes feel very heavy, and you'll soon be fast asleep. This means **you won't feel or remember any of your ABG!**

## What happens during the ABG?

First, the surgeon takes a coin-sized bit of soft, spongy bone out of your hipbone (don't worry, it grows back!). They put this in the gap in your gum. Then they close it up with special stitches that fall out when you're healed.

The surgeons are very careful when they do this. It usually takes about 1 and a half to 2 hours- **about as long as a football game**. But you won't feel or remember any of it!



The ABG takes an hour or two- but you will be asleep!

## How will I feel afterwards?

**Some children feel sick or dizzy** waking up, but the nurses help! You'll have a **tube of water** in the back of your hand so you don't get thirsty.

Your **mouth may look or feel swollen**, so talking might feel odd. You will have special '**stitches**' in your mouth. Your **hip may feel sore**, and have a medicine tube in it. But don't worry- you'll look and feel back to normal soon!

You'll get medicine to stay comfy, and should be **home in a night or two**. The stitches will fall out when they are ready. After a **week or two off school** and lots of rest, you should feel fine!

## What can I eat afterwards?

You probably won't want to eat very much at first. But when you do, you will only be allowed **soft foods**- like soup, mash or ice cream. Use the space on the back to list soft foods you like!

## What do I need to do once I'm home?

Once home, you need to brush your teeth (being gentle around the stitches) and use special mouthwash. **It is very important to keep your mouth clean.**

You'll need to **rest from exercise for 4 weeks**, and rest from contact sports (like rugby or karate) for 6 weeks. Be sure to think of fun things to do instead!



Clean teeth  
are very  
important!

## What if I feel worried?

Most people feel a bit worried about going to hospital. This is totally normal! If you are worried about having your ABG, **tell your adult(s)**. They can answer or find out things you're not sure about.

If you are very worried, your adult(s) can ask **someone from the hospital to help you feel better**. There are people who can talk and play with you, to help you feel less worried about your ABG.

