

KYLE'S STORY

Lovely Kyle was born with cleft lip and palate.

We went to the 20wk scan excited to see our baby and find out if it was a boy or girl. After taking a few measurements the stenographer excused herself and my heart sank. She came back with some others who looked talked amongst themselves and acted like we weren't even there. That's when the stenographer said that our baby had a cleft lip, but the palate appeared to be intact.

After the scan we were able to speak to a midwife who explained that our baby was healthy and would require an operation to fix his lip. Having a vague idea of what all this meant I went home and googled cleft lip; all sorts of images appeared. Halfway down the page was a link to a group called CleftPALS; I gave them a call and spoke with them at length.

They sent me out some info and I was invited to attend a function where I could meet other cleft affected families. This was the best thing that I could have done. Speaking to other families and meeting the kids who have experienced a cleft gave me a much better idea on what to expect.

The birth proceeded as normal; when the paediatrician checked over Kyle he discovered that he also had a cleft in his palate. Contrary to what I had read the nurse insisted that I should be able to breastfeed. After the better part of a day they finally gave me a Haberman feeder; this only created more drama as nobody knew how to assemble and use it. I rang the CleftPALS feeding hotline and the lady talked me through the process and Kyle got his first proper feed. (I would strongly suggest that you ring the hotline and have a chat to our bottle guru Faye, order a bottle and have a play around with it before your bub is born).

A few days after we left hospital we were in the supermarket when a lady gave me a horrified look, it took me a few seconds to realise what was wrong. I politely said hello and we started talking. She asked me if I was disappointed that my



baby was sick. I corrected her and said that he was healthy and I couldn't have wanted a more perfect baby; and in my eyes he was perfect.

Kyle is now 4 years old and a typical boy, he has had several operations to repair his lip and palate. We are in speech therapy and on the waiting list for grommets. Having a cleft affected child was unexpected, but once we got past the initial feeding issues, he was just like every other baby. He started childcare at 4 months and has flourished ever since.