

16. The soft palate friendly speech bulb for velopharyngeal insufficiency

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Velopharyngeal insufficiency is an anatomic defect of the soft palate making palatopharyngeal sphincter incomplete. It is an important concern to address in patients with bilateral cleft lip and palate. Speech aid prosthesis or speech bulbs are best choice in cases where surgically repaired soft palate is too short to contact pharyngeal walls during function but these prosthesis have been associated with inadequate marginal closure, ulcerations and patient discomfort. Here is a case report of untreated bilateral cleft lip and palate associated with palatal insufficiency treated by means of palate friendly innovative speech bulb. This modified speech bulb is a combination of hard acrylic and soft lining material. The hard self-curing acrylic resin covers only the hard palate area and a permanent soft silicone lining material covering the soft palate area. A claw-shaped wire component was extended backwards from acrylic and was embedded in soft silicone. The advantage of adding the soft lining material in posterior area helped in covering the adequate superior extension and margins for maximal pharyngeal activity. This also improved the hypernasality, speech, comfort and overall patient acceptance.

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