

News Release

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5K Fun Run to Raise Awareness for Cleft Lip and Palate

Parents dreaming of the arrival of a new bundle of joy hope for a healthy baby. Yet, many babies are born with birth defects. According to the March of Dimes, about 6,800 babies in the U.S. are born with oral clefts each year. A cleft lip is a birth defect in which a baby's upper lip doesn't form completely and has an opening in it.

Texas Tech Physician Dr. Joshua Demke said clefts of the lip could occur with or without a cleft palate. Cleft lip and palate are more common in boys, and isolated cleft palate is more common in girls.

Lubbock will host the first Cleft 5k Fun Run, Clefts United to benefit babies and children with cleft lip and palate at 8 a.m. Sept. 21 at the Texas Tech University Urbanovsky Park, 1701 Flint Ave.

"We hope to raise money for cleft patients in West Texas/Eastern New Mexico and for cleft patients abroad on overseas mission trips but mostly this is an opportunity to raise awareness about cleft lip and palate and support our community sharing in the strength of our cleft friends, neighbors and family members," Demke said.

There are a variety of environmental and genetic factors that contribute to facial clefting in newborns. Folic acid supplementation by mothers during pregnancy decreases the chances of having a baby born with a cleft palate.

Cleft lip is typically closed surgically when a baby is 2 to 3 months old. Palate repair involves surgically closing off and separating the roof of the mouth from the nose and is typically performed when a baby is 9 to 12 months old.

Surgeons wait to close the palate because if operated too early, there is greater chance of developing problems with growth restriction of the upper face. Demke said babies with clefts of the palate frequently are unable to feed well without specialized cleft feeding nipples and bottles.

"Children born with clefts can lead normal lives and the physical deformities can be minimized with surgery though children with cleft palates benefit from being followed by a multi-disciplinary team of specialists including plastic surgeons, ENT's, hearing and

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speech experts, dentists and orthodontists. Such teams see children from birth to adulthood as they face different challenges at different points in life.” Demke said.

Early registration can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/Cupcakes-for-Clefts-106925360667542/>. Same-day registration will be available.