



Frequently Asked Questions

1. How do I become a volunteer?

Non-medical volunteers are selected from District 5300 Rotarians. Their clubs must have contributed to the current mission. Volunteers complete the district application form, submit a short essay, and fill out the application for non-medical volunteers found on the Rotaplast website. They will need a current passport and an updated resume. Applicants will be screened by Rotaplast and then interviewed and selected by a district committee. All applicants will be expected to attend one orientation meeting.

2. What is entailed to be a volunteer?

On a Rotaplast mission volunteers can expect long working hours on their feet, physical exertion, unpredictable weather conditions, and basic lodging (sometimes dormitories/barracks.) There are 11 specific non-medical roles: mission director, assistant mission director, quartermaster, medical records keeper, equipment sterilizer, interpreter, photojournalist, ward coordinator, recovery room helper, patient transport, and recreation therapist. Specific duties are on the Rotaplast website. The mission director will assign volunteers to specific roles based on their skills; one does not apply for a position. Volunteers become part of Rotaplast alumni. As such, they are expected to help expand Rotaplast's efforts through public awareness of the program.

3. How much will it cost me to volunteer for the mission?

Rotaplast's non-medical volunteers pay personal airfare costs to and from the mission site. Depending on the location that cost could be in the neighborhood of \$750 - \$1,500. The costs of passports, visas, immunizations, etc., are a responsibility of the volunteer. District 5300 volunteers will most likely need to arrange their own travel to/from San Francisco. Housing at the site is covered, and local transportation to/from the hospital is covered. Most meals are frequently covered but it depends on the site.

4. If I am medical professional, how may I become a volunteer?

Individuals representing the following medical fields are needed: plastic surgeons w/cleft care backgrounds, pediatricians, anesthesiologists, operating room nurses, recovery room nurses, orthodontists, dentists, and speech pathologists. All medical volunteers are selected by Rotaplast. Applications are on the Rotaplast website. Most of the airfare cost is covered for medical volunteers.

5. May I extend my trip for personal travel before or after the mission?

Volunteers may extend their trip only AFTER the mission for a small fee. Expenses related to such are personal. Both medical and non-medical volunteers must fly as a group (usually out of SF) at the start of the mission because a medical supply box is included as part of each person's luggage allowance.

6. May I use air miles to defray the cost of the flight?

Not usually. Travel arrangements for the mission are made by a Rotaplast-contracted travel agent so that the volunteers on the mission fly together on the same carriers in order to bring medical supplies.

7. What causes cleft lip and cleft palate?

In most cases the cause of cleft lip and cleft palate is unknown. Most scientists believe clefts are due to a combination of genetic and environmental factors. There appears to be a greater chance of clefting in a newborn if a sibling, parent, or relative has had the problem. Another potential cause may be related to a medication a mother may have taken during her pregnancy. Cleft lip and cleft palate may also occur as a result of exposure to viruses or chemicals (e.g. from the mother smoking) or the lack of certain vitamins (e.g. folic acid) while the fetus is developing in the womb.

8. Do we still have cleft lip and cleft palate in the United States?

Cleft lip, with or without cleft palate, affects one in 700 babies annually, and is the fourth most common birth defect in the U.S. Compared with girls, twice as many boys have a cleft lip, both with and without a cleft palate. However, compared with boys, twice as many girls have cleft palate without a cleft lip. We are not aware of its prevalence because of immediate treatment in the United States.

9. Why is it important to perform cleft lip and cleft palate surgeries?

Untreated cleft lip and palate anomalies have many negative consequences. They lead to repeated ear infections, malnutrition, feeding problems because liquids frequently flow through the nasal passages, poorly aligned teeth, failure to gain weight, poor growth, and speech difficulties. Children's facial appearance often identifies them as social outcasts in their communities.

10. How much does a mission cost?

A typical mission costs between \$80,000 and \$150,000 depending on the location, primarily because of airfare. Obviously a mission to Africa or India will cost more than one to Mexico. The money covers 2 weeks of expenses for a typical team of approximately 30 medical and non-medical volunteers, the non-medical members paying their own airfares. The expenses also include local transportation, lodging, most meals, hospital expenses, medications, equipment, local publicity, and safety precautions. During the mission generally three operating rooms will be in use concurrently.

11. What is the Rotaplast website?

Encourage interested individuals to go to the Rotaplast website:
www.rotaplast.org.

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