

Pediatric Tonsillectomy/Adenoidectomy

Patient Postoperative Instructions and Information

Your child has just undergone tonsillectomy and/or adenoidectomy. The following instructions are provided to help you over the next several postoperative days and should answer any questions that might arise. However, please feel free to contact us for any other questions you may have.

1. Diet

On the first evening after surgery you may attempt to feed your child a liquid diet. Your child has received IV fluids during hospitalization which will carry him/her through the next 24 to 48 hours. Therefore, there should be no cause for alarm if your child is not taking much liquid orally. The diet may then be advanced as quickly as the patient tolerates. Ask your physician about specific diet restrictions. Some physicians encourage a soft diet for two weeks following surgery. Remember, the only person who knows how their throat feels is your child and if he or she wants something more to eat give it to them. Acidic liquids such as orange juice or lemonade may sting and burn however. Popsicles and cool liquids maybe better tolerated than thick liquids such as ice cream. It is much more important that your child drink fluids than eat solid foods. Do not be alarmed if your child eats very little over the next several days. As long as he or she is drinking liquids, able to produce tears when crying, and urinating, then adequate hydration is being maintained. Nausea and vomiting can occur during the first evening as a result of having a general anesthetic. Giving pain medicine or antibiotics on an empty stomach can make it worse. If your child is not able to keep liquids down do not force them to do so. Stop giving the liquids and try again in the morning. If your child experiences nausea and vomiting at that time, please call us.

2. Pain

Typically patients report that the pain builds up for the first few days and is the worst around the 5th day following tonsillectomy. The amount of discomfort usually lessens, then may increase again around day 7-9 after surgery, as some of the whitish tissue covering the tonsillectomy site falls off. After this, there is generally steady improvement with less discomfort. Also realize that patients who have had their adenoids removed will often get a stiff neck and very bad breath. Generally this goes away in a few days. Complete healing of the operative area generally takes several weeks.

3. Medication

For pain relief, please use plain Tylenol® in liquid, tablet or chewable form according to the dosage directions on the package for your child's weight and age. If your child is old enough, a prescription for something stronger will be given to you prior to discharge. Try not to give pain medicine on an empty stomach. This can increase the chance of nausea and vomiting after surgery. Please stay away from aspirin or any aspirin products, including Aspergum. Also stay away from medications such as PediaProfen® (ibuprofen) as all of these types of medication tend to promote bleeding.

4. Activity

Have your child rest for the first few days following the operation, and gradually resume activities after that time.

5. Fever

It is not uncommon to run a low-grade fever, which can be expected after tonsil and/or adenoid surgery. A fever below 102 degrees often clears and should not cause concern. This is probably the result of mild dehydration and the healing process in the oropharynx. Please call us if the fever exceeds 103 degrees.

6. Odor

There may be a foul odor to your child's breath that is not unusual as the tonsillar areas are healing. You can also expect a lot of phlegm in the throat, as your child will be reluctant to swallow, and this phlegm tends to build up. This is not abnormal and should not cause concern. We recommend that you encourage fluid intake to help this.

7. Bleeding

Bleeding is a rare problem that can occur after tonsil and/or adenoid surgery. The chances of this happening are greatest during the first several hours after surgery and then between the fourth to eighth day afterwards. Please note that about 4 to 8 days after tonsillectomy it is normal to see whitish or yellowish material in the area where the tonsils were removed. It is normal for this material, similar to a "scab" on a scrape, to break loose as the area heals. Occasionally some bleeding will occur at this time. There may also be a slight increase in discomfort. Any bleeding should be minimal and should stop on its own. It sometimes helps to rinse out the mouth or gargle with ice water. If bleeding is severe, or if bleeding does not stop soon after onset, you should contact our office immediately.

9. If you have any problems or questions, please feel free to contact us at 410 554 4455. If you are unable to contact us, go to the emergency room.