

Post-operative Instructions Following Tonsillectomy with or without Adenoidectomy

General:

Tonsillectomy and adenoidectomy are performed for chronically infected or enlarged/obstructing tonsils or adenoids. These procedures are generally performed on an outpatient basis. If you have medical conditions such as sleep apnea or bleeding disorders, your physician may keep you in the hospital overnight. Recovery from tonsillectomy can be difficult due to the often severe sore throat experienced during the first several days following surgery. Anticipation of this recovery period allows for patients and family members to create a comfortable healing environment.

Diet:

You are at risk for dehydration during the recovery period due to the sore throat. Dehydration can cause increased pain, increased likelihood of bleeding and delay in healing. You may have liquids by mouth once you have awakened from anesthesia. Only liquids or soft foods should be taken for the first 3-5 days following surgery. Any liquids or soft foods are acceptable but patients occasionally report discomfort with hot, acidic or spicy foods. Clear liquids (flavored sports drinks, apple juice, grape juice, fruit punch, water, blended iced drinks, popsicles) are preferred. Foods such as soup, noodles, scrambled eggs, oatmeal, yogurt, smoothies, applesauce, mashed potatoes and ice cream are usually well tolerated. Anything that has a hard edge (toast, chips) or that is difficult to chew (steak) should be avoided for 2 weeks.

Pain control:

You are likely to experience a moderate to severe sore throat for several days following tonsillectomy. A mild to moderate sore throat or intermittent twinges of pain from yawning, coughing, or sneezing may last for an additional 2-3 weeks. Liquid pain relievers (Lortab® elixir or Tylenol® with codeine elixir) taken by mouth are often effective in “taking the edge off” and allowing patients to rest or sleep comfortably. Please take the pain medication as prescribed by your surgeon. You should avoid non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS) such as aspirin, ibuprofen, naproxen (Excedrin®, Motrin®, Naprosyn®, Advil®) for the first week, because these drugs are mild blood thinners and will increase your chances of having post-operative bleeding.

Activity:

No heavy lifting (greater than 20 lbs.) or straining for 2 weeks following the surgery. Do not perform any activity that significantly increases your heart rate, breathing rate, or blood pressure for 2 weeks, as this increases your chance of bleeding. You should plan for 1 week away from work. If your job requires manual labor, lifting or straining, then

you should be out of work for 2 weeks or limited to light duty until the 2 week mark. Walking and other light activities are encouraged after the first 24 hours.

Oral and nasal care following the surgery:

The back of the throat is usually red, white and swollen during the first few days after tonsillectomy. As the throat heals, the raw surfaces are replaced by a white or gray membrane until complete healing occurs at 2-3 weeks. Brushing the teeth during this time is encouraged although brushing the back of the tongue should be avoided (this will trigger a painful gag reflex or cause bleeding). Halitosis (bad breath) is normal in the first two weeks following surgery. This is due to the healing process in the back of the nose and throat. Small amounts of blood-tinged sputum are normal for several days after surgery, and are easily distinguished from active bright red bleeding. Staying well hydrated by frequently sipping water can minimize the halitosis and sore throat. A humidifier next to your bed at night will help moisturize and soothe the raw tissues. Hot steam showers can provide some symptomatic relief. If your surgeon also performed adenoidectomy, over-the-counter nasal saline spray is recommended 2-3 times daily for the first 14 days.

Follow-up appointment:

Your follow up appointment in the office will be 2-3 weeks following your surgery. This visit should be scheduled prior to your surgery (at the time of your pre-operative visit). If you do not have the appointment made, please contact our office when you arrive home from the surgery center.

Please call our office immediately if you experience:

- *Active bleeding from the mouth or nose
- *Difficulty breathing
- *Inability to drink or tolerate liquids
- *Two or more episodes of vomiting (or any vomiting of blood)
- *Fever greater than 101 degrees Fahrenheit