

# Instructions to Patients Following Tonsillectomy and/or Adenoidectomy



Ear, Nose & Throat *SpecialtyCare*

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## **Tonsillectomy and Adenoidectomy**

### *What is a tonsillectomy?*

A tonsillectomy and adenoidectomy involves removing the tonsils and adenoids. This is done without an external incision, going through the mouth. There usually is no need for stitches.

This procedure is done because the tonsils and/or adenoids are causing infection, breathing problems, swallowing problems, blockage, pain, or other reasons which your doctor will discuss with you.

### *What to expect after surgery*

#### *Diet & Oral Intake*

Fluids/liquids are much more important than solid foods. Dehydration will make everything worse.

The best way to assure there is enough oral intake of fluids is to make sure there is enough urine. If the patient is voiding small amounts, infrequently, and if the urine is darker in color, then he/she is not getting enough fluids. Other symptoms of dehydration include dry mouth, dry eyes which are sometimes "sunken" in, and dry doughy skin to the touch.

If the patient has symptoms of dehydration and cannot increase their fluid (water) intake, they may need to be seen in the hospital outpatient/emergency department for evaluation and possible IV fluid replenishment.

Foods should be cool, soft, smooth and bland for 2 weeks (ice cream, yogurt, jello, eggs, soup or macaroni and cheese, mashed potatoes, pedialyte, etc.).

Avoid citrus, salty, hot foods or liquids, coarse foods (i.e. crackers, toast, pretzels, etc.).

Avoid anything that can cut, scrape or that would irritate a canker sore.

### *Pain & Discomfort*

Pain is different for every patient. Pain can be controlled and lessened to a tolerable level but usually will not go away completely. The pain may last from 1-3 weeks.

Short bouts of severe shooting pain into the ears is common. Jaw pain and tightness may occur as a result of the muscle spasm from the local irritation of the back and sides of the throat. Stiff neck may occur, particularly in patients who have had an adenoidectomy.

Nausea is commonly seen as an effect of the pain medicine, the anesthesia or the surgery itself. Decreasing the narcotic pain medicine or using Tylenol alone may alleviate the nausea.

### *Pain Relief*

For the first 2-3 days it is best if you take your pain medication routinely every 4-6 hours. Do not wait for the pain to build up before taking the medicine. It is better to stay ahead of the pain.

You may try regular Tylenol. If this is not adequate, you will have received a prescription for a stronger narcotic medication. Take this as directed, no more frequently and in no greater amount than is listed on the bottle. Do not take both the regular Tylenol and the prescription medicine together unless specifically told to do so.

Remember, narcotics have side effects - constipation, nausea, vomiting, mood changes, and can even cause decreased breathing - so be careful with their use.

Plan ahead. We will only refill narcotic prescriptions by phone during office hours (M-F, 9AM-5PM).

Remember, we will not refill these prescriptions on nights or on weekends.

No aspirin containing medicines or those meds containing substances called non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (i.e. ibuprofen, Advil, Motrin, Aleve, etc.) for two weeks after surgery unless otherwise directed by your doctor.

### *Other Steps You Can Take*

**ICY COLD** - Cold reduces swelling and helps deaden the nerve endings (heat does the opposite). Try popsicles, ice chips, snow cones, slushies, ice cream, shakes, etc.

Chewing gum helps break the jaw muscle spasm and creates saliva, which encourages swallowing and aids in healing.

Distraction, by whatever technique, will help. Movies, video games, music or other things can keep the mind active and away from concentrating on the discomfort.

A cool mist humidifier at the bedside may reduce the morning throat dryness and discomfort.

Elevation of the upper body on 2 or 3 pillows may help reduce the swelling.

### *Other Medication*

You may be given an antibiotic prescription. Please take all of this medicine as directed.

If you are on other prescription medications, please check with your doctor as to when to resume taking them.

### **Activity**

No bending, lifting, straining, travel, or active play (gym, running, swimming, etc.) for 2 weeks after surgery.

If your child has had an adenoidectomy only (and no tonsillectomy), they may resume normal activities as they feel up to it. The only restrictions are no head upside down, no swimming under water and avoid activity in cold dry air (skating, skiing, sledding) for 2 weeks.

### **Bleeding**

Bleeding may occur at any time after surgery but is most common at 3 days to 2 weeks after the procedure as the healing scab starts to melt away.

Minor streaking of blood in the saliva may occur and is usually easily controlled by sucking on ice chips, gargling ice water and/or chewing gum.

Occasionally, the bleeding may be significant. This will be manifest by suddenly spitting out gross red blood or clots from the mouth or coughing it out of the mouth. If the blood is swallowed, it will irritate the stomach causing the patient to vomit it back up. This kind of bleeding is always abnormal and you should notify our office immediately or go to the emergency room. Our doctors are always available to assess and treat this problem 24 hours a day. You may call **612-871-1144** for our answering service during off hours.

#### **When to call**

- if the patient is becoming dehydrated and not taking fluids
- if there is bleeding that does not stop immediately with the above measures
- if you have any other concerns

There are always doctors on call for emergencies. You may be asked to go to the emergency room for evaluation and possible treatment.

#### **Follow up**

If the patient has had a tonsillectomy and/or adenoidectomy with no other procedure (such as PE tube placement), a follow-up appointment may not be necessary. Your surgeon may ask to see you 3-5 weeks after surgery, but usually no visit is needed.

If the patient is eating normally and swallowing without difficulty, breathing quietly and sleeping peacefully, the voice is normal, there has been no bleeding and the patient & family are no concerns, you do not need to make an appointment. Remember, this applies only to those patients who have had a tonsillectomy and/or adenoidectomy without any other ancillary procedure.

If there is any question or problem or if you desire to be seen for any reason, please feel free to make an appointment for that approximate four week time frame.

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