



POST OPERATIVE CARE INSTRUCTIONS FOLLOWING TONSILLECTOMY AND ADENOIDECTOMY

The tonsils are two pads of tissue located on both sides of the back of the throat. Adenoids sit high on each side of the throat behind the nose and the roof of the mouth. Tonsils and adenoids are often removed when they become enlarged and block the upper airway, leading to breathing difficulty. They are also removed when recurrence of tonsil infections or strep throat cannot be successfully treated by antibiotics.

The procedure to remove the tonsils is called a tonsillectomy; excision of the adenoids is an adenoidectomy. Both are usually performed concurrently; hence the procedure is known as a tonsillectomy and adenoidectomy or T&A.

T&A is an outpatient surgical procedure lasting between 20 and 40 minutes and performed under general anesthesia. Normally, the young patient will remain at the hospital or clinic for about two to four hours after surgery for observation.

When the tonsillectomy patient comes home

Most children require seven to ten days to recover from the surgery. Some may recover more quickly; others can take up to two weeks for a full recovery. Younger children often tolerate the procedure very well. Older children may require a longer recovery time and complain of more discomfort. The following information is designed to help you and your child through the postoperative period.

Drinking: The most important requirement for recovery is for the patient to drink plenty of fluids. Juice, “flat” soft drinks, popsicles, Jell-O, and Gatorade are excellent sources of liquid. Any of the child’s favorites may be offered, however certain citrus fruits may cause pain. Some patients experience nausea and vomiting after the surgery caused by the general anesthetic. This usually occurs within the first 24 hours and resolves on its own. Contact your physician if there are signs of dehydration (urination less than 2-3 times a day or crying without tears).

MINIMUM Fluid Intake for the First 24 Hour Period is:

Weight of Patient	Minimal Fluid Intake
Over 20 Pounds	34 Ounces
Over 30 Pounds	42 Ounces
Over 40 Pounds	50 Ounces
Over 50 Pounds	58 Ounces
Over 60 Pounds	68 Ounces

Eating: Generally, there are no food restrictions after surgery. The sooner the child eats and chews, the quicker the recovery. Tonsillectomy patients may be reluctant to eat because of sore throat pain; consequently, some weight loss may occur, which is gained back after a normal diet is resumed. **Any food that the child will eat is allowed.**

Fever: A low-grade fever may be observed several days after surgery. If the temperature is higher than 102 and cannot be controlled with Tylenol or Motrin, please contact the office. It is important that your child drink plenty of fluids after surgery. This helps the healing process and helps reduce the chance of fever.

Activity: Children tend to regulate their own activity levels depending on how they feel. We recommend that the child's activity be limited for 5-7 days. Most children should plan to be absent from school for approximately 5 days. Sustained physical activity should be avoided for 14 days after surgery. Travel away from home is not recommended for two weeks following surgery.

Snoring, Runny, or Stuffy Nose can occur after surgery and last for about 2 weeks: This is normal and will resolve with the healing process. Normal saline nasal spray can be used. Occasionally, the child may have some changes in voice due to the removal of adenoid tissue. They sometimes sound more nasal. This usually will return to normal within four weeks.

Scabs: A scab will form where the tonsils and adenoids were removed. These scabs are thick, white, and cause bad breath. This is not unexpected. Most scabs fall off in small pieces five to ten days after surgery and are swallowed. It is common for the pain to increase for a few days when the scab on the tonsillar area falls off. You may notice a small amount of blood when this occurs.

Bleeding: With the exception of small specks of blood from the nose or in the saliva, bright red blood should not be seen. If such bleeding occurs, contact your physician immediately or take your child to the emergency room. Bleeding is an indication that the scabs have fallen off too early, and medical attention may be required.

Pain: Nearly all children undergoing a tonsillectomy/adenoidectomy will have mild to severe pain in the throat after surgery. Some may complain of an earache (because stimulation of the same nerve that goes to throat also travels to the ear), and a few may incur pain in the jaw and neck (due to positioning of the patient in the operating room). Children complain of differing degrees of throat and/or ear pain for 7 to 14 days. Pain is often worse at night and may prompt the need for additional pain medication. Pain is more easily controlled if it is treated when it first begins. We recommend that your child take the pain medication prescribed every 4-6 hours while awake for the first 5-7 days. Please be aware that most narcotic pain medications also contain Tylenol. You should **NOT** give pain medication and Tylenol to your child in the same 4-hour period. **DO NOT USE ASPIRIN IN ANY FORM** as this may increase the chance of bleeding. Pain control is a trial and error treatment. Motrin may also be used for pain.

Nausea: Narcotic pain medications (such as Lortab or hydrocodone) may cause nausea and/or vomiting. Taking this medication after drinking or eating may decrease the chance of nausea and/or vomiting.

Antibiotics: Your child will be given a 7-10 days course of antibiotics, which you should begin the day after surgery.

Bad Breath: It is very common for children to get bad breath for several weeks. The back of the throat will change with healing. Do not be concerned if the throat appears white and foamy. Your child may brush their teeth, but gargling and mouthwash are not recommended. Coughing and throat cleaning may be done gently.

Follow-up Appointment: Please call and make a follow-up appointment for 4-6 weeks after surgery.

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