

POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS: Intracapsular Tonsillectomy/Adenoidectomy

1. Diet

On the first evening after surgery you may attempt a liquid then advance to a soft diet. Ask your physician about specific diet restrictions. Stay on a soft diet for one to two weeks following surgery. Acidic liquids such as orange juice or lemonade may sting and burn. Popsicles and cool liquids may be better tolerated than thick liquids such as ice cream. It is much more important that you 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.

2. Pain

Typically patients report that the pain builds up for the first few days and is the worst around the 3rd to 5th day following tonsillectomy. After this, there is generally steady improvement with less discomfort. Also realize that patients who have had their adenoids removed may 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.

It is very common for the ears to hurt during the healing process. Ear pain, at times, may be severe. This ear pain is actually referred pain from the healing throat and is generally not a result of an ear infection. Treatment for this ear pain is incorporated in the pain management plan discussed above for the throat. Generally, no additional therapy is necessary

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. Although ibuprofen (Motrin®, Advil®) may promote bleeding, the risk is small and it is usually safe to use as an anti-inflammatory to be alternated with Tylenol® (acetaminophen) every 3 to 4 hours for pain relief.

4. Activity

Have your child rest for the first few days following the operation, and gradually resume activities after that time. Rigorous exercise and heavy lifting should be avoided for the first week.

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 101.5 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 101.5 degrees.

6. Odor

There may be a foul odor to your child's breath 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.

8. If you have any problems or questions, always feel free to call us at the office numbers listed on the bottom of this page, day or night.