



Post-op tonsillectomy instructions

Tonsillectomy is a day surgery procedure, however, recovery can be more difficult for some. Typical recuperation is from five to seven days, but recovery can be longer for older children, teenagers and young adults. Full healing can be expected by seven to 10 days, at which time the patient can resume his or her normal diet and activities.

Pain management following surgery is important, and it is most effective when started before pain begins. In addition to **throat pain**, your child may experience **ear pain**, headache and **neck pain**. Excessive fussiness and refusal to swallow or take liquids are also signs of pain. The first few days following surgery are usually the most painful. Pain may increase again in days five (5) through seven (7) when the scabs from the surgery site start to come off. A full recovery can be expected in two weeks or less.

Make sure your child is adequately **hydrated** following surgery because having enough fluids in their system will lessen the pain and speed the recovery process. Mild dehydration increases the discomfort experienced following surgery. Encourage your child to drink fluids as much as possible. Sport drinks such as Gatorade help replace fluids and nutrients if your child does not want solid food or if they have been vomiting. It's best to give your child food and liquids after you give them their pain medication.

A normal diet following surgery is fine so long as it does not cause discomfort. Softer foods such as macaroni, mashed potatoes, popsicles, pudding, or ice cream are also good choices during recovery. Salty or acidic foods may cause increased discomfort and should be avoided. Corn chips (Doritos), peanuts and popcorn should not be eaten for the first week following surgery. After a week, you can begin giving your child his or her normal diet.

Your child should be encouraged to rest for one week following surgery but he or she may feel like being active sooner. However, don't allow your child to engage in prolonged and strenuous physical activity for the first 7 to 10 days after surgery. Typically, your child may be absent from school or daycare for seven days. However, your child may return to school or daycare earlier if he or she has no fever, is back to his or her normal diet and no longer needs narcotic pain medication.

Fever following surgery is common and may be as high as 102° F periodically for several days. Increased temperature does not indicate infection, but may make discomfort worse. Give the prescription pain medication (which contains acetaminophen) or ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil) as needed for relief. Sustained fever over 103° F that is not reduced with medication may be a sign of an infection, such as a cold or flu.

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Post-op tonsillectomy continued

Nausea and vomiting following surgery are rare, but may happen. After the first hour or two following surgery, there should be no blood in the vomit. If vomiting occurs, first stop giving your child food and let him or her sip fluids with electrolytes such as Gatorade or Pedialyte. Patients will be given a preemptive prescription for nausea and vomiting should the vomiting persist. Prolonged vomiting along with poor fluid intake may lead to dehydration. Signs of dehydration include decreased urination or dry diaper, dry mouth and lack of tears with crying.

Bleeding, should it occur, is most common in the first 24 hours following surgery or about a week postoperatively when the scabs fall off. A small amount of bleeding (1 to 2 tablespoons) can be normal as the scabs separate. Brisk bleeding or vomiting blood requires immediate medical attention. Call the ENT Care for Kids office at 214-696-8900 for instructions. After hours you will be connected to the on-call doctor. The on-call doctor can also be reached by dialing 972-566-7000 and ask to be connected to the answering service for the Pediatric ENT doctor on-call.

Other minor problems such as bad breath and voice changes should go away as your child recovers.