

Adult Tonsillectomy

Tonsillectomy

A tonsillectomy is surgery to remove the tonsils. Tonsils are the lymph tissues that lie on each side of the back of the throat.

What to Expect

- Throat pain (mostly when you swallow) for 1-2 weeks.
- Ear pain for 7-10 days.
- Blood tinged mucus for a week. This is normal. Avoid lots of coughing and clearing of the throat.
- A grey-yellow membrane where the tonsils were removed. It will slowly go away as you heal. This often takes 2 weeks.
- Bad breath while your throat heals. Drink lots of fluids and good oral care will help decrease this odor.

Pain Relief

- For throat and ear pain, take the pain medicine as directed. **Stay on a schedule**, even taking pain medicine during the night.
- You may also want to use an ice pack or ice collar.
- If you take pain medicine ½ hour before meals, it will help to decrease the pain when you swallow.
- You may also use a humidifier or vaporizer to provide comfort.

Diet

Follow the "tonsillectomy diet" for 1-2 weeks. This means:

1. Begin with clear liquids (water, broth, apple juice, iced tea, Gatorade, Jell-O, ice chips and popsicles). Cool or lukewarm liquids are easier to drink at first. Avoid red colored liquids.

2. Advance to full liquids (smoothies, cream soups, sherbet, cooked cereals) when ready. Use caution with milk or milk products as they may cause you to have more phlegm in your throat.
3. Add soft, bland foods when you can swallow them (scrambled eggs, macaroni and cheese, mashed potatoes).

Drink plenty of fluids to avoid getting dehydrated. This will also help you to heal. You can start eating more solid foods and drinking thicker liquids as soon as you feel able.

Avoid

- Acidic foods (orange or grapefruit juice, tomatoes)
- Spicy foods
- Rough foods (dry toast, popcorn, peanuts, potato chips, cold cereals, crackers)

Activity

- Limit your activity for 1-2 weeks. Avoid physical exercise, swimming or lifting more than 25 pounds.
- Be sure to get plenty of rest.
- Elevate your head with an extra pillow for 1 week to help decrease swelling.
- Plan to be out of school or off work for about 1-2 weeks.

When to Call

Call if you have:

- Large amounts of active bleeding or blood clots.
- Nausea and vomiting that doesn't get better.
- A fever over 101° F (taken by mouth)
- Pain not controlled with medicine.
- A feeling that you are not healing as you should. It takes about 7-10 days before you will start to feel better.

Who to Call

University Hospital ENT Clinic
(608) 263-6190

S. Park St.- ENT Clinic
(608)-287-2500

After clinic hours and weekends, the clinic number is answered by the paging operator. Ask for the ENT resident on call. Leave your name and number with area code. The doctor will call you back.

The toll-free number is **1-800-323-8942**.

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 7/2020 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#4486.