

Caring for Your Child After a Tonsillectomy and Adenoidectomy

Tonsillectomy and Adenoidectomy

This is a surgery to remove lymph tissue that lies on either side of the back of the throat and behind the nose.

What to Expect

Your child may have:

- Sore throat. This may last 7-10 days.
- Ear, jaw, and neck pain. It may not start until 3-4 days after surgery. This may last for 7-10 days.
- Nausea and vomiting. Your doctor may prescribe medicine to help this at home.
- A yellow-grey membrane where the tonsils were removed. It will slowly go away as the area heals, often in 3-4 weeks.
- Restless, disturbed sleep or nightmares for a couple of weeks.
- Bad breath. Your child's breath may be bad smelling for many days while the throat is healing. Drinking plenty of liquids helps decrease the odor.
- Snoring and a nasally voice as the throat heals. If it lasts longer than a month, please tell your doctor.
- A low-grade fever up to 102°. This is normal for up to 7 days after surgery.

Pain Relief

Your doctor will suggest medicine for sore throat and ear pain. Focus on pain control so that your child can drink plenty of fluids.

Your doctor may suggest giving both acetaminophen (Tylenol®) and ibuprofen. We will tell you the proper dosages for both medicines on the day of surgery.

Give these medicines for the first 48-72 hours around the clock.

We may also write a prescription for medicine to treat severe pain if acetaminophen (Tylenol®) and ibuprofen are not enough.

Try to time the pain medicine so that your child takes it about 1 hour before meals. This will help to decrease pain when your child swallows.

An ice pack may help. You may want to put a small bag of frozen corn or peas in a plastic bag and wrap it in a towel. Place it on the throat for 20 minutes at a time.

Your child should try to avoid excess clearing of the throat.

A humidifier or vaporizer may ease throat soreness.

Activity

Limit your child's activity for 1 week.

- Your child should avoid strenuous exercise and activity, swimming, or lifting more than 25 lbs.
- Be sure your child gets plenty of rest.
- Plan for your child to be out of school or daycare for at least 1 week.

Diet

Your child may lose weight from eating less than normal. This is fine as long as they are drinking plenty of fluids.

Follow the "tonsillectomy diet" for one week. This means:

1. Begin with clear liquids such as: water, broth, apple juice, popsicles, Jell-o®, Hi-C®, and Kool-Aid®. Cold or lukewarm liquids may feel better at first. Frequent small sips are better than quickly drinking a large amount

of fluid and then not drinking for the next few hours.

2. Try adding other foods like pudding, ice cream, milkshakes, and cream soup.
3. Add soft foods as soon as your child feels ready. Soft foods include scrambled eggs, mashed potatoes, macaroni and cheese, cooked cereal, yogurt, and apple sauce.
4. Your child will eat solid foods once they can swallow better. Your child may not want to eat solid foods the first week. Just make sure they drink plenty of liquids. Acidic or spicy foods (orange or grapefruit juice, tomatoes) may make your child's throat more sore, but won't do any harm.

Do not feed your child rough and crunchy foods an entire week. These foods may scratch your child's throat and cause bleeding. This includes:

- Popcorn
- Pretzels
- Potato chips, other chips
- Nuts
- Cold cereal

Follow-Up

Your child will not have a follow-up clinic visit unless there is a problem. You may call at any time with questions or concerns.

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#5746

When to Call

Call if your child has:

- **Any bleeding**
- Nausea and vomiting that do not go away.
- A fever over 102°.
- Pain not controlled with medicine.
- Not gotten better after 7-10 days.
- Dehydration. Your child should be urinating at least twice in 24 hours.

Who to Call

Pediatric Otolaryngology (ENT) Clinic
Weekdays from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm
(608) 265-7760 or (800) 323-8942

After hours and weekends call
(608) 262-0486. This will give you the paging operator. Ask for the ENT doctor on call. Give your name and phone number with the area code. The doctor will call you back.