Tonsillectomy with or without Adenoidectomy (After Surgery)

Your child has had his tonsils (with or without adenoids) removed. It is important to remember that every child reacts to this surgery differently. Some children wake up ready to eat and others wake up with a lot of throat pain and do not want to swallow. Here are some things to do at home to help your child recover.

Pain:

Your child may have throat, neck and/or ear pain after a tonsillectomy. This may be troublesome for up to 2 weeks after surgery. You will need to give your child pain medicine on a regular schedule for several days after surgery or until the pain improves. Make sure your child has something in his stomach before giving the pain medicine, as it can cause nausea.

You should write down when you give your child pain medicine and when the next dose is due. You should wake him up through the night to give the pain medicine and have him drink at that same time for the first few nights after surgery. Also keep track of your child’s bowel movements because the pain medicine that is prescribed for your child can cause constipation.

Some physicians prescribe narcotics, some use plain acetaminophen (Tylenol), and others may recommend ibuprofen (Motrin®) or naproxen (Aleve®). Based on your doctor’s preference, your child’s age, the likelihood that he has sleep-disordered breathing, and other factors, your child will be placed into one of the following four categories. Your provider will mark the preference as it relates to your child:

- [ ] Non-narcotic medication, and should not be switched to a narcotic.
- [ ] Non-narcotic medication, but could be switched to a narcotic if necessary.
- [ ] Narcotic medication, and could be supplemented with ibuprofen.
- [ ] Narcotic medication, and should not be supplemented with ibuprofen.

Narcotic medication must be obtained with a prescription. Other pain medications do not require a prescription.

Ear Pain:

Your child may complain of **significant ear pain** after surgery, especially when drinking fluids. This is normal after a tonsillectomy and may continue for up to 3 weeks after surgery. Be sure to give the pain medicine (outlined above) as your child’s doctor has prescribed. If your child is old enough, chewing gum or eating chewy foods may help with the ear pain.
**Fluids:**

It is very important that your child drink an adequate amount of fluids after surgery. Be firm with your child and encourage him to drink even if he does not want to drink. If he is old enough, give him the amount he needs to drink and turn off the TV or computer games until he drinks that amount. Below is a guide to help you determine the amount of fluids your child should be drinking.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Child’s Weight</th>
<th>Amount of Fluids per Hour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25-34 lbs</td>
<td>1-1/2 to 2 ounces every hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-65 lbs</td>
<td>2 to 2-1/2 ounces every hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66-99 lbs</td>
<td>2-1/2 to 3 ounces every hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 lbs and up</td>
<td>More than 3 ounces every hour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Diet:**

If your child drinks well after surgery, you may start small amounts of soft foods. This may include soft cooked cereal, cooked pasta, soft fruit, cooked vegetables, soups, pudding, ice cream, and other soft foods.

Do not give your child fried foods, scratchy foods, or peanut butter for 2 weeks after surgery. These foods can irritate the scabs on the back of the throat and make them come off before they are healed. This could cause bleeding.

**Fever:**

It is normal for a child to run a fever between 99° F (37.2° C) and 100° F (37.8° C) after surgery. Your child’s temperature may go up if he does not drink enough fluids. Please call your child’s doctor if his temperature is 102° F (38.9° C) or higher and does not go down with acetaminophen (Tylenol®), any acetaminophen-containing product, or ibuprofen (Motrin®). It is important to give your child frequent drinks and pain medicine as ordered.

**Bleeding:**

There is a small chance your child may have some bleeding after the tonsillectomy. It can happen up to 14 days after surgery. Do not allow your child to forcefully blow his nose, as this can cause the bleeding. If your child has more than 2 teaspoons of bright red blood from the nose or mouth, do the following:

1. Have your child sit up.
2. Have your child spit out the blood. Try not to let him swallow it, so it is not near his airway.
3. Take your child to the nearest emergency department. If you live within 30 minutes of Children’s Mercy Hospital at 2401 Gillham Road in downtown Kansas City, Missouri, we recommend that you take your child to this facility for evaluation. If you take your child to a hospital other than Children’s Mercy Hospital, ask the doctor to call Children’s Mercy at (816) 234-3000 and have the ENT (ear, nose, and throat) physician on call paged.
**Vomiting:**

Your child may vomit after a tonsillectomy. This can happen at the hospital or at home. You may notice old, dark red or brown blood in the vomit. Wait 1 hour and restart fluids. Give your child small amounts every 15-20 minutes. If he continues to vomit, give your child a suppository (if prescribed by your child’s surgeon.) An age-adjusted dose of Benadryl® may also help. Call your child’s doctor if he vomits more than 2-3 times in 2 hours.

*If your child vomits bright red blood, take him to the nearest emergency department.* (See instructions above.)

**Activity:**

DO NOT let your child participate in any rough or active play (including sports, recess, and gym) for 14 days after surgery. Your child may return to day care or school approximately 7 days after surgery. If your child needs prescription pain medicine during the day, he is not ready to return to school. Encourage your child to get up and do quiet activities for the first week after surgery.

**Mouth Care:**

Bad breath is common after a tonsillectomy. This may continue for several weeks after surgery, even with good tooth brushing or gargling. Your child should carefully brush his teeth starting the day after surgery. Your child may gargle with mild salt-water solution or diluted mouthwash, but DO NOT use Listerine® or other alcohol-containing mouthwashes.

**Call your child’s doctor or the Children’s Mercy Hospital Information Line at (816) 234-3188 if:**

- Your child has severe pain that is not helped with the scheduled doses of the prescribed pain medication.
- Your child has a fever of 102° F (38.8° C) or higher even with acetaminophen (Tylenol®), an acetaminophen-containing product, or ibuprofen (Motrin®), if allowed.
- Your child vomits 2-3 times in 2 hours.
- Your child refuses to drink for 6 to 8 hours.
- You have questions or concerns about your child.

**Follow-Up:**

Your physician will recommend one of several types of follow-up to be sure your child has improved after surgery. This may consist of an office visit, a letter, or a phone call. Please be sure this has been arranged by the time your child leaves the hospital.