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TONSILLECTOMY & ADENOIDECTOMY POST OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

What to expect after tonsil & adenoid surgery:

The tonsillectomy & adenoidectomy procedure takes about 30 minutes and your surgeon will talk with you as soon as the surgery is over. At that time you will receive prescriptions for antibiotics and pain medicine. Your surgeon will also discuss any relevant findings and specific instructions for the post op period. Use the information below as a guide for the few weeks after surgery. If you have any questions, please call our office at 937-4100.

After tonsils and adenoids are removed, the surgical areas in the throat are not usually closed by stitches but heal from the edges. It usually takes about three weeks for healing to be complete. In the meantime, there will be "white patches" in the back of the throat where the tonsils were. This is normal and it does not mean an infection exists. Sometimes there will be an odor to the breath for about a week which is not unusual. You may receive post operative antibiotics which should cut down somewhat on the number of bacteria in these healing areas in the back of the throat.

Can my child go home after surgery?

Children usually go home the same day after surgery, but in some cases your doctor may recommend keeping your child overnight in the hospital for observation. Children under three or those with significant other medical problems may be scheduled for overnight observation.

How bad will it hurt?

Your child's throat will be very sore for quite a while after surgery. Most children have some discomfort up to 14 days after a tonsillectomy. The sore throat will make it difficult and painful to swallow. Your child may also experience ear pain which often starts 5-7 days after the surgery. Using the pain medication as prescribed by your surgeon will dramatically reduce the pain. This should allow your child to remain comfortable and with the ability to drink fluids. Especially with younger children, it takes lots of encouragement to keep them drinking at home.

What can my child eat after surgery?

For the first day or two after surgery you should offer cool liquids such as water, juice, popsicles and jello. If your child is up for it, you may also offer ice cream, milk shakes, smooth yogurts and pudding. As your child starts to feel better you can add other soft foods like applesauce, mashed potatoes, scrambled eggs and pasta. Try to avoid crunchy or spicy foods and stay away from citrus drinks like grapefruit juice as this can cause a burning feeling in the throat. There are no hard and fast rules regarding a post tonsillectomy diet. If your child has a favorite food and it can be chewed well and swallowed without difficulty, then it is probably ok to eat. Please remember that an upset stomach and vomiting are common during the first 1-2 days after surgery. If this is severe or continues beyond 48 hours, call our office.

When can my child return to school?

Most children will be out of school or daycare for 7-10 days after surgery. Your child should not participate in any vigorous activity including gym class for at least 2 weeks after surgery.

What are some reasons I should contact the doctor?

1. Any fever over 102.5F. A low grade fever is common for the first few days after surgery. Keeping your child well hydrated will help but if fever persists or it goes too high, please contact your doctor.
2. Nausea and vomiting may be present, but if it is severe or interferes with fluid intake, please let us know. There are medicines which can be used to help this problem.
3. If your child refuses to drink or you suspect your child is dehydrated.
4. Any bright red bleeding from the mouth or nose should be reported to your doctor immediately.

What else do I need to know?

1. Do not give your child any pain medication not prescribed by your doctor. Please do not use aspirin (which children should never receive anyway), or ibuprofen (Motrin) as this increases the risk for bleeding.
2. Bad breath may be present for 10-14 days following the procedure.
3. Constipation may be noted for several days after the procedure. The narcotic pain medications tend to make this worse.
4. If you look in your child's mouth, you may see two whitish areas where the tonsils used to be. This is normal and not a sign of infection.
5. We strongly recommend that your child stay in the local area for a minimum of two weeks after surgery due to the small but important risk of bleeding.
6. Plan on making a follow up appointment 3-4 weeks after surgery.
7. If you have any questions or would like further information specific to your child, please call our office.