

SAN FRANCISCO OTOLARYNGOLOGY

Providing ear, nose, and throat care since 1940

Post-Operative Instructions: Tonsillectomy with or without Adenoidectomy

Pain: For the first several days after surgery, pain in the throat is to be expected and usually resolves within the first 2 weeks. Pain is usually controlled with liquid Tylenol or with prescription pain medication given at the time of surgery. See the back of this sheet for dosing information. Pain is often worse at night and your child may need additional pain medication during the night. Ear pain, especially with swallowing, is common and is not due to an ear infection. Occasionally, a stiff neck may also occur. Do not give your child medications containing aspirin, ibuprofen, ketoprofen or naproxen for 2 weeks following surgery.

Nausea: An upset stomach may occur after surgery. When your child is no longer nauseated, try clear liquids in small amounts such as water, apple juice, clear soda, ginger ale, Gatorade, popsicles or Jell-O. If clear liquids are tolerated, follow the diet instructions below.

Diet: The more your child drinks, the sooner the pain will subside. Water, apple juice, grape juice, Gatorade and Pedialyte are excellent sources of fluid. We recommend a soft diet for 10 days following surgery. Soft foods such as yogurt, pudding, smoothies, mashed potatoes, noodles, applesauce and Jell-O are encouraged. Popsicles, ice cream and sherbet are also permitted so long as they do not contain nuts or other hard items. Avoid hot or spicy foods, or foods that are hard or crunchy. For children over age 5, chewing sugar free gum speeds recovery by reducing muscle spasms and can be started any time after surgery. Do not give chewing gum to any child under age 5.

Fever: A low grade fever (less than 101.5 degrees) may occur after surgery and should be treated with Tylenol (acetaminophen).

Physical activity: Your child should rest after surgery. Indoor quiet play is allowed after 1-2 days, but strenuous physical activity should be avoided for 2 weeks. Children usually miss 1 week of school, but up to 2 weeks may be needed. Your child may resume gym and other sports after 2 weeks.

Ice collar: An ice collar can be helpful for sore throat after surgery. Make this by placing ice cubes and water into a large Zip-Lock bag and wrapping it in a towel. Gently lay the ice pack on the front of the neck. Gargling with ice water may also be helpful.

Bleeding: Bleeding after surgery is unusual, but can occur up to 2 weeks after surgery. If your child develops blood clots, fresh bleeding from the mouth or vomiting of blood, please take your child to the nearest emergency room. **Bleeding after tonsillectomy can be very serious and may require hospitalization.** For severe bleeding, call 911. If your child goes to the ER or is hospitalized, please call the office.

Follow up: Please schedule a visit 3-4 weeks after surgery.

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When to call the doctor: Call the number below and press option “1” to page the doctor

- If your child becomes lethargic or is unable to drink fluids for more than 1-2 days
- If your child has an extremely painful, stiff neck
- If your child has a persistent fever higher than 101.5 °F
- If your child gets sick to their stomach more than 3 times after you get home
- If your child has active bleeding from the mouth

Please call if you have any questions!