



Post-Operative Tonsillectomy Instructions

After tonsillectomy, there are several aspects of care that are important. The first is hydration and nutrition. Hydration is very important the first several days after surgery. This should consist of ample liquids (juices, milk, and sport drinks) to ensure urination at least twice daily. Adequate urine output varies with age and size of the patient but this is a reasonable starting point.

Solid food intake can begin as soon as the patient can tolerate solids, but this usually lags behind liquid intake. Foods should be soft and cool initially. Hard, sharp or brittle foods such as chips, peanuts, popcorn should be avoided for at least 2 weeks. These foods may dislodge healing crusts and result in bleeding. Ice cream, milkshakes, and popsicles are fine, often soothing the site of discomfort.

Pain control should consist of regular doses of acetaminophen (Tylenol) or a prescribed narcotic pain medicine. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatories such as Ibuprofen or Motrin can sometimes be used in children, but only with the approval of your physician. Pain control often has to be tailored to the individual patient. Narcotics can cause nausea and vomiting, especially early in the post-operative period when lingering effects of general anesthesia are present. They should be taken with food or fluids to minimize nausea and vomiting. Medications that reduce nausea and vomiting, such as Phenergan, may be prescribed by your physician.

Low-grade fever is normal after tonsillectomy. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) may be used for fever reduction. Narcotic pain medicines are usually combined with acetaminophen so they too reduce fever. Rarely, high fever may be indicative of a more serious problem. To further address this, you should contact your physician for fever greater than 101.5 F which does not respond to Tylenol or your pain medicine.

Bleeding occurs in approximately 2-4% of patients after tonsillectomy. If this occurs it is typically 5-8 days after surgery when the crust in the throat sloughs. For bleeding that is more than a couple of tablespoons and does not respond to gargled ice water, you should contact your physician to determine the next appropriate step. This may require a visit to the emergency department depending on the severity of the bleeding.

If you have any questions or concerns, please call the office during business hours Monday-Friday (8:30am-5:00pm) at (512) 458-6391. For emergencies after hours or during the weekend, please call the Medical Exchange at (512) 458-1121 and ask for the doctor on call for our group.