

POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS: TONSILLECTOMY AND ADENOIDECTOMY

Adequate Fluid Intake:

This is the single biggest issue after tonsillectomy; if the patient doesn't drink enough fluids, they get dehydrated which makes the pain **worse**, makes the nausea from the pain medications **worse**, and generally make them feel miserable. Food intake is not critical now; the appetite will return. Adequate fluid intake ***is very important!!*** Below are hints to enhance fluid intake when it "hurts too much to swallow":

1. Start with the patient's favorite beverage
2. If the fizz in Coke, Sprite, etc hurts, let it go flat
3. Gatorade, Popsicles and juice bars are good
4. Avoid acidic drinks like orange juice
5. Use a straw
6. Strong smelling urine and less than 3 trips to the bathroom per day indicate the beginning of dehydration

Duration of Pain:

Day of Surgery: not too bad because of the medication used during surgery
Post op Day 1: starts to hurt; need to use pain medications regularly
Post op Day 2-5: should begin to ease
Post op Day 5-7: may hurt even worse as the "scabs" on the back of the throat begin to come loose which exposes raw tissue
Post op Day 9➔ : pain resolving

Pain Control:

1. Pain medication on an empty stomach will cause nausea and possible vomiting; have at least some liquid down first (but preferably apple sauce, broth from chicken noodle soup, etc).
2. Take pain medication regularly (every 4 hours) while awake for the first day or two, then only as needed. Each patient's pain tolerance is different, may need to take regularly day 5-7.
3. Use the Viscous Lidocaine every 4 hours as needed. It may be thinned slightly in water / juice / Gatorade and gargled for additional pain relief. This can be especially useful before meals.
4. Try a heating pad or ice pack on the neck for additional relief.
5. Popsicles and juice bars may be better tolerated than ice cream.
6. Soft diet is recommended (jello, pudding, macaroni & cheese, or scrambled eggs). Avoid anything dry, hard or crunchy (toast, chips, nachos, or bacon).

Ear Pain:

This is common after Tonsillectomy as the throat and ear share a sensory nerve; when the throat is hurting, the ear hurts also. Use the regular pain medications; if the pain gets unbearable, a numbing eardrop can be called in to your pharmacy.

Nasal Congestion or Bleeding:

Some patients experience nasal congestion and drainage for 5-7 days after the surgery. Reassurance and cold medications such as Dimetapp or Triaminic (avoid ones with alcohol – causes pain) will usually solve the problem. Occasional blood streaks in the sputum are OK; it is from the scab in the throat. If the patient spits out more than one teaspoon of bright red blood, have her/him gargle with ice water. Call our office.

Bathing: Avoid long hot showers during the first week as this may cause bleeding. Brief showers are OK.

Activity: No PE or other heavy physical activity for 7 days. The patient may return to other activities when he/she feels able. Call the office with any questions not covered here.