



Washington University in St. Louis

SCHOOL OF MEDICINE



Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery

POST OPERATIVE CARE INSTRUCTIONS FOLLOWING TONSILLECTOMY

The following instructions will help you know what to expect in the days following surgery. Please call if you have any questions or concerns.

Physical Activities: After surgery, your child should rest, but indoor quiet play after one or two days is fine. Strenuous physical activity following surgery is to be avoided for 2 weeks. Children may return to school whenever comfortable; a week is average; but 10 days is not unusual. Your child may resume PE and other sports after two weeks.

Diet: The more your child drinks, the sooner the pain will subside. Water, apple juice, grape juice, and Gatorade are excellent sources of liquid. Soft foods such as popsicles, ice cream, sherbet, yogurt, pudding, apple sauce, and Jell-O should also be encouraged. Other soft, easily chewed foods are also excellent, such as soft noodles. Avoid hot or spicy foods or foods that are hard and crunchy. For children over age 5, chewing sugar free gum speeds help by reducing the muscle spasm after surgery and can be started anytime after surgery. Chewing gum should not be given to any child under the age of 5.

Pain: For the first several days following surgery, pain in the throat is to be expected. This can usually be controlled with Liquid Tylenol (acetaminophen) or Tylenol with Codeine (prescription will be given at the time of surgery). *We generally recommend that medications containing ibuprofen, motrin, ketoprofen be avoided for 2 weeks.* Pain is often worse at night and may prompt the need for additional pain medication. Ear pain, especially with swallowing is common; this is not due to an ear infection, but due to referred pain from the surgery. Occasionally a stiff neck may also occur. Please call if it becomes excessively painful. See the back of this sheet for Tylenol (acetaminophen) and Tylenol with Codeine dosing for children.

Ice Collar: An ice collar is helpful for post-operative sore throat. Make this by placing ice cubes and water in 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.

Fever: A low-grade fever (less than 101.5 degrees) following surgery may occur and should be treated with Tylenol (acetaminophen) or Tylenol with codeine if pain is also present. While children have a fever, they should play quietly or remain in bed. If the fever persists (more than 2 days) or if a fever higher than 101.5 F develops, please call. Fever may indicate that you have not taken in sufficient fluids.

Bleeding: Post-operative bleeding is unusual, but it can occur up to 2 weeks after surgery. If your child develops blood clots, fresh bleeding from the mouth or vomiting of blood, please bring your child to the nearest emergency room. **Bleeding after tonsillectomy can be very serious and may require hospitalization.** For severe bleeding, call 911. Please call our office or on-call ENT if your child goes to the ER or is hospitalized. The numbers are listed below.

Follow-up: Within 3-4 weeks after surgery your child will be evaluated for healing.

PLEASE CALL IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS!
Office phone number 314-454-6162 / Monday - Friday 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM.
After regular hours, call 314-454-6000 and have the operator contact the ENT resident on call.

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RECOMMENDED DOSAGE OF PAIN MEDICATIONS (Every Four Hours):

Weight	Acetaminophen elixir (160mg/5ml)
10-15 lbs	2 mls
15-20 lbs	3 mls
20-25 lbs	4 mls
25-30 lbs	5 mls
31-40 lbs	6 mls
41-50 lbs	8 mls
51-60 lbs	10 mls
61-70 lbs	12 mls
71-80 lbs	14 mls
81-90 lbs	16 mls
> 90 lbs	20 mls

Acetaminophen products (Tylenol, Panadol, Tempra, etc.) may be repeated every 4 hours, but not more than 6 times a day.