

Tonsil and Adenoid Surgery Instructions

Home Care Following Adenoid and Tonsil Surgery

ACTIVITY:

It is advisable for the patient to rest at home for the first 48 hours. Activity may be gradually increased as the patient's vigor increases. There is no absolute rule regarding appropriate time to return to work or school, but generally it is satisfactory to return to these activities in approximately 7 to 10 days. Generally by this time the patient is on a fairly normal diet. Vigorous activity should be avoided for 14 days following surgery.

DIET:

Adequate liquid intake is the most important aspect of the patient's diet in the first 3 days. Frequent small feedings of soft foods or liquids are usually best tolerated. Soft drinks, fruit juice nectars, jell, custard, ice cream, Popsicles, Gatorade or Pedialyte are excellent. As the patient's appetite improves, solid foods should be encouraged. The most common cause of fever in the first few days after surgery is inadequate fluid intake, not infection (which is rare).

GENERAL:

The patient often lacks energy and is restless for a period of several days, may be restless at night, and sleep fretfully. These symptoms gradually improve over a period of 3 to 14 days. Due to a lack of food or the use of codeine there may be constipation for several days.

Bad breath is quite common. This results from a white to yellowish membrane that forms in the throat in the region of the tonsil surgery. Bad breath may be improved by the use of a mild salt-water solution as a gargle. This may be made by adding 1/2 teaspoon of table salt to 8 oz. of warm tap water. The membrane breaks off during healing. When this occurs the patient may spit up some bloody mucous. This normally occurs between the 5th and 14th day post-operatively. This may be treated by the use of ice chips, lying quietly in bed, and the use of an ice collar. If bleeding persists or is greater than several tablespoons of bright red blood, your physician should be contacted.

Throat pain associated with tonsillectomy is most helped by increasing the oral intake. The pain is frequently severe enough to require medication such as acetaminophen (Tylenol, Datril) or prescription medications as advised by your physician.

One should avoid the use of aspirin as this increases the possibility of bleeding. Throat discomfort may likewise be relieved by the use of cool compresses, ice collars on the neck, ice chips or by the use of chewing gum. Pain in the ear is extremely common with tonsil and adenoid surgery. This may occur whether there has or has not been any surgery on the ears. This pain is a "referred pain" from the nerve irritated when the tonsils were removed. This symptom is relieved by the same procedures used to relieve throat pain. Chewing gum is particularly helpful for this type of pain, as it seems to be due to muscle spasm in the chewing muscles.

FEVER:

It is common for patients to run a fever between 99 up to 101 degrees. It may be aggravated by a poor fluid intake producing dehydration. If the fever does not respond to acetaminophen (Tylenol), or is over 101.6, your doctor should be contacted.