



# Tonsil and Adenoid Surgery

Patient and Family Education

This teaching sheet contains general information. If you have any additional questions, please speak with the office nurse at (813) 262-1330.

## What are Tonsils and Adenoids?

The tonsils are grape-sized pieces of lymph tissue in the back of the throat on each side. Adenoids are lymph tissue in the back of the nose. They are usually removed if they become so large that they interfere with breathing, swallowing, or if they become chronically infected.

## How long will it take to recover?

After removal of the tonsils and adenoids, your child may lack energy and tire easily. Most children require pain medicines for about 10-14 days post-surgery. Increased snoring and nasal congestion are normal and is caused by temporary swelling and scabbing in the nose and back of the throat. Bad breath is also normal. The snoring, congestion, and bad breath should be vastly improved within 14 days after surgery. Your child may be restless and not sleep well. These problems gradually get better in 7 to 14 days.

## How can I take care of my child?

- Diet:** The most important thing for your child to have after surgery is liquids. This will help lessen problems with fever, constipation, and healing. Water, Apple Juice, and Gatorade are good choices. Frequent small feedings of soft foods and cool liquids are usually most comfortable. **NO CRUNCHY FOODS.**
- Pain Medicines:** A very sore throat is normal after the tonsils are removed. Expect pain in the ears during the second week because the nerves that go to the tonsils also go to the ears. Give pain medicine (Tylenol, ibuprofen, or the prescription pain medicine) every 4 to 6 hours for the first 10 days. **DO NOT USE ASPIRIN.** You can use ice packs on your child's neck to help your child feel more comfortable.
  - We recommend alternating Tylenol/Lortab and Ibuprofen every 3 hours for the first 7 days.
- Mouth Exercises:** Have your child open their mouth big and wide every 5-10 minutes (or when a commercial comes on TV). This helps to keep the jaw loose and helps with ear pain. Ideally, they should be able to put their 3 middle fingers turned sideways between their teeth.
- Fever Medicines:** If your child develops a fever it is most likely that they are dehydrated. Make sure they drink enough to be urinating at least 5 times a day. If the fever continues and is above 101.5°F please call our office.
- Bad Breath:** This is normal. It comes from the white to grey color scab that forms over the tonsil surgery site. As the throat heals the bad breath will go away.
- Bleeding:** There should be no bleeding from the nose or mouth after your child returns home. If there is any bleeding, have your child gargle ice water and call our office. If the bleeding does not stop in 20 to 30 minutes, bring your child to the St. Joseph's Children's Hospital emergency room immediately.
- Activity:** It is best that your child rests at home for the first 48 hours after surgery. There is no rule for the right time to go back to school, but a guideline is 10 days after the tonsils are taken out. Rough play and contact sports should not be allowed for a full 14 days after surgery. No traveling for 2 weeks please.
- Constipation:** Pain medicine is often constipating. If your child does not return to regular bowel function after surgery please give Miralax and/or Milk of Magnesia to assist. Both can be purchased over the counter at your local pharmacy.
- Post-Op Appointment:** A follow up appointment should be made in our office for 3-4 weeks after surgery, please call if not already scheduled.

## When should I call the doctor?

Call the office if your child experiences:

- A temperature over 101° F
- Bleeding from the mouth or nose
- Signs of Dehydration: Extreme lethargy, sunken eyes, or decreased urine output— no wet diapers for 3 hours for infants or less than 5 urinations for older children and teens
- If you have any concerns about how your child looks or feels

## Encourage Fluids:

Over 20 pounds  
34 Ounces Min.  
(4 1/4 Cups)

Over 30 pounds  
42 Ounces Min.  
(5 1/4 Cups)

Over 40 pounds  
50 Ounces Min.  
(6 1/4 Cups)

Over 50 pounds  
58 Ounces Min.  
(7 1/4 Cups)

Over 60 pounds  
68 Ounces Min.  
(8 1/2 Cups)