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Tonsillectomy Post-op 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, 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, yogurt, milkshakes, pudding 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. Aspirin or non-steroidal anti-inflammatories such as ibuprofen, Motrin, Naprosyn, Advil etc. should not be used because they increase the risk of bleeding. Pain control should be tailored to the patient and some require scheduled (every 4 hours) dosing rather than dosing based upon demand. Narcotics often 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. Your physician perhaps in suppository form, may prescribe medications that reduce nausea and vomiting, such as Phenergan. 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 3-5% of patients after tonsillectomy. This usually occurs 5-8 days after surgery as a complication of healing when the crust in the throat sloughs. For bleeding that is more than a tablespoon 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 and sometimes evaluation in the operating room, depending on the severity of the bleeding.

Please schedule an appointment to see your doctor 2-3 weeks after surgery.

The days following surgery:

- 5-7 days of rest is required and avoid heavy lifting or physical exertion until your

doctor permits you to do so.

- Gargling or excessive clearing of the throat should be avoided.
- Take in lots of fluids! Children may require significant attention to keep well hydrated. It is normal to be somewhat of a battle to keep smaller children drinking fluids.
- Foods: Avoid harsh citrus fruit juices such as orange, lemon, pineapple, or hot and highly seasoned foods - No sharp foods such as bacon, dry toast, etc.
 - a. Day of Surgery -Take abundant quantities of liquids including water, jello and sherbet.
 - b. Day after Surgery -May add malted milks, chocolate pudding, cottage or cream cheese, mashed potatoes, pureed vegetables or any other soft food that is appealing and can be swallowed without too much difficulty.
 - c. Days 3 and 4 after Surgery -May add soft cereal, eggs, chopped meats, or boiled hot dogs. From this point on, any foods, which are not rough, may be taken in.
- There are no bathing restrictions.
- If there have been no complications you may return to work or school in 5 to 7 days, but limit your physical activities.
- Call your doctor's office for a follow-up appointment.

Answers to FAQ's on post-op issues:

- A sore throat and earache upon swallowing are to be expected. Encouraging fluids and foods will speed recovery.
- A mild elevation in temperature is usually an indication of not taking enough fluids.
- Mouth odor may be observed for 7 to 10 days and is usually relieved by adequate fluid intake.
- Call your physician's office if bleeding from the throat, temperature elevation above 101, severe constant earache, or a persistent cough develops.
- Breathing complications with children after general anesthesia occur rarely. The symptoms are croupy sounds when breathing in, noisy gasping sounds or abdominal tension with breathing.
- If you were given steroids during surgery or prescribed steroids after surgery, you may experience an elevation in anxiety or sleep disturbances. Less common symptoms are hallucinations.
- With all patients, common symptoms with narcotics/pain medications are itching without rash and nausea. If rash or vomiting develop after taking a medication please contact your physician

Medications:

- If your doctor ordered medication, take as he or she directed. If you have questions regarding your medication, please check with your pharmacist or doctor.

- Tylenol is usually adequate for children.
- Do not take Aspirin products.
- Motrin may be taken for breakthrough pain if absolutely necessary, but can tend to thin the blood so do not use in cases of excessive bleeding.
- Do not drive or operate any machinery or drink alcoholic beverages for 24 hours or while taking narcotics.
- In older children or adults, an ice collar or cold compress to the neck may be soothing.