

TONSILLECTOMY | THROAT SURGERY POST-OP INSTRUCTIONS

These instructions apply to all tonsil, tongue and other throat surgeries. You and your family should read these instructions several times to familiarize yourselves thoroughly with them. Attempt to follow them faithfully because those who do generally have the smoothest postoperative course.

SWELLING - Every operation, no matter how minor, is accompanied by swelling of the surrounding tissues. This may apply to the neck, tongue or face. It should subside over a period of several days, but may be present for up to 2 weeks.

HEMORRHAGE - Bleeding after tonsillectomy or throat surgery occurs in 3-5% of patients. This is usually noticed by the taste of blood and it can usually be seen in by looking in the mouth with a mirror and flashlight. It can occur at any time after surgery, but most often occurs around day 7-10. It is often mild and will stop on its own. If noticed, you should repeatedly gargle iced-water for 10-15 seconds then spit out the water. Repeat this process for ~10-15 minutes. If during this process the spit-out water is looking clear with no streaks of bright red blood the bleeding has stopped and you do not need to do anything further. If there is still bleeding after iced-water gargle you should call your surgeon and/or go to the nearest emergency room (Temecula Valley Hospital, Rancho Springs Medical Center, Inland Valley Medical Center or Loma Linda Murrieta). Continued bleeding may require additional procedures or another trip to the OR to control. If Dr. Leach is unavailable, there is an on-call Ear, Nose and Throat doctor available 24/7 at the above listed hospitals to stop the bleeding if needed. Drinking plenty of liquids every day and avoiding hard/crunchy foods for two weeks are the best ways to avoid hemorrhage.

PAIN - Throat surgery can be very painful. Usually, the first 48-72 hours are less painful than the next 7-10 days and this is normal. Pain may be in the throat, ears, and/or neck. In addition to pain medication, ice packs, resting with head elevated (instead of laying flat), and staying well hydrated are all ways to decrease pain.

ORAL CARE - The patient should brush teeth as normal. Avoid using any over the counter mouthwashes or gargles (including alcohol free brands) as they will irritate the throat.

TEMPERATURE - Low grade fevers are very common in the first 72 hours after any surgery. There are many reasons for this including: side effects from anesthesia, mild dehydration after surgery and a process called atelectasis. Patients will often think they have an increased temperature because they feel warm but, in reality, do not. The patient's temperature does NOT need to be taken routinely, but be sure you measure temperature with a thermometer if the patient feels warm. Report any persistent temperature above 101.5°.

DIET - You should institute a soft diet for 2 weeks. Straws are ok to use. The temperature of the food/liquid does not matter, but most patients prefer cold or lukewarm temperature. Drink lots of clear liquids (water, gatorade, juice, etc) for the full 2 weeks. Milk and red-colored liquids are ok to drink.

- Recommended Foods: ice cream, frozen yogurt, milkshakes, smoothies, blended soups, soft pasta, jello, and yogurt.
- Foods to avoid: dry/crunchy foods, foods that require lots of chewing

OTHER SIDE EFFECTS OF SURGERY - Changes to the patient's voice are common after surgery and subside when the swelling goes down. Bad breath and white patches on tongue and throat are also common and will go away when the surgical site has fully healed. It is not unusual after anesthesia or surgery for patients to feel weak or lightheaded. This gradually subsides in several days.

Nausea/Vomiting may also occur after surgery and may be a side effect of anesthesia or the pain medications. If feeling nauseated in the first 24-48 hours after surgery, the patient should first start slowly drinking clear liquids (water, juice, soda) and avoid eating solids. If nausea persists after this period contact your surgeon for an anti-nausea prescription

RESUMING ACTIVITIES - It is advisable to sleep with the head of the bed elevated for the first week after surgery. This helps to minimize swelling to the surgical site. The head of the bed may be elevated by sleeping on two or three pillows or by placing several pillows under the mattress. You should avoid all activities that may increase the blood pressure in the head area.

Avoid: bending over, lifting heavy objects (anything greater than 10 lbs), doing any activity that would normally make you short of breath or sweat. Try to avoid blowing your nose for two weeks. Try to avoid sneezing for the first several weeks post-operatively. If you must sneeze, let it come out of the mouth like a cough. Excessive coughing should also be avoided.

You should avoid physical activity for 2 weeks.

RETURNING TO WORK OR SCHOOL - The average patient is excused from work/school for 1 week and then slowly returns to work/school over the next week. Return to work or school is dependent upon the amount of physical activity involved.

MEDICATIONS

Children: Your child received pain medications during surgery. Several hours after surgery you should start your child on acetaminophen and ibuprofen liquids (over the counter) at the recommended dose for your child age/weight. It is generally recommended to alternate between acetaminophen and ibuprofen every 3-4 hours. Be sure to read the recommendations on the bottle to make sure you do not overdose your child with the given medication over a 24 hour period. Even with pain medications your child will still be in some pain, especially with swallowing and talking. If acetaminophen and ibuprofen are not controlling your child's pain, please call the office. Occasionally, stronger prescription narcotics are required to achieve adequate pain control, but in general these are not recommended unless other medications are not adequate.

Further Instructions: _____

Instructions received with understanding: _____
(Signature of responsible adult)

Signature RN _____ Date/ Time _____