

# Tonsillectomy Postoperative Care Instructions

Removing your tonsils or tonsillectomy is a common procedure typically performed on an outpatient basis. This makes recovery much more comfortable as it can occur in your home, a familiar environment for the patient.

However, depending on your pre-existing medical conditions, you may be required to spend the night in the hospital for observation—if this is the case, your ENT physician will let you know prior to surgery.

Follow these best at-home practices for a smooth recovery after your tonsillectomy.

## What to Expect Post Surgery

Immediately after surgery, you will be taken to a recovery room where you'll be monitored for several hours to check your recovery from anesthesia, your vitals, and, most importantly, your pain levels.

You will be asked to drink some liquids to make sure you can do so. If you're doing well, you'll be allowed to go home. An adult family member or friend should be with you the first night after surgery.

You'll likely experience a lot of pain and discomfort after your surgery, that may last up to two weeks. However, the pain will get better slowly and can effectively be managed with the correct dosage of pain medication. In addition, you may also experience soreness in your throat, jaw, mouth, and tongue.

It's not uncommon to experience the following symptoms after your tonsillectomy:

- Bad odor emanating from your mouth and nose for a week—you will often see white patches on your throat; these are scabs and indicate healing
- Ear, mouth, and throat pain that comes and goes
- Fever of up to 100.5 degrees Fahrenheit for the first couple of days

If you have been experiencing any bleeding or a fever over 100.5 degrees, contact your ENT doctor right away.

## Post-Surgery Diet

You will have trouble swallowing food after your tonsillectomy and will more than likely lose your appetite. This is why we recommend sticking to a liquid diet—water, non-citrus juices, popsicles—for the first 24 hours, as your body better tolerates these initially.

You can then gradually progress on to soft foods to ensure that you're not just adequately hydrated but getting enough in your stomach for your pain medication and/or course of antibiotics.

Some soft foods and liquids we recommend consuming after tonsillectomy include:

- Plenty of cold clear liquids like water and non-acidic juices—this will help keep your throat moist and ease pain
- Low-fat ice cream, popsicles
- Jello
- Slushie
- Noodles
- Smoothies
- Apple sauce
- Mashed potatoes
- Cream of wheat
- Cool soup

Avoid the following:

- Acidic foods and juices, including oranges and tomatoes
- Hot liquids
- Spicy foods
- Dry or crunchy foods such as chips, toast, and crackers
- Salty and fried foods
- Raw vegetables
- Cereal

## Post-Surgery Activity Level

Rest is an essential part of the recovery process, and post-tonsillectomy, you will be required to take it easy for at least 14 days after surgery—no heavy lifting, vigorous exercise, or anything that results in elevated blood pressure and heart rate levels as this can increase your risk of bleeding.

For the first 48 hours post-surgery, keep your activity to a minimum. Do not try to cough, blow your nose or sneeze too vigorously while you recover for the next two weeks.

You can also elevate your head by propping up a pillow or two while you sleep to help with the swelling and pain. Most people can return to work or school ten days after their tonsillectomy.

## Post-Surgery Medications

Managing your pain at home is key to a successful recovery after your tonsillectomy. You will experience pain and swelling for the first week after your surgery.

Your doctor will likely prescribe the following medications:

- Nausea medication—for patients who experience vomiting or an upset stomach after eating
- Pain relief medication that can include prescription-based narcotics or non-narcotic drugs like acetaminophen. For patients on blood thinners or aspirin-based products, you will be asked to stop your dosage for two weeks after the surgery
- Medication to coat your throat
- An ice collar—for those experiencing a sore throat it is placed on the front of the neck to relieve pain

Taking pain medicine an hour before you can eat or consume liquids can also help make the process of eating more bearable.

## Important

Call our practice or go to the emergency room immediately if you experience any of the following symptoms after your surgery:

- Bright red blood from your nose
- Coughing or vomiting blood
- Persistent clear vomiting
- Dehydration, (dark red urine or not urinating as your normally would)
- Fever over 100.5 degrees Fahrenheit
- Fullness or pain in the ears that lasts for more than ten days
- Severe pain that persists even after you've taken medication

During office hours, from **X AM to X PM**, Monday to Friday: **XXX-XXX-XXXX**

After hours, call **911** for any possible emergency situation.