



C O M M U N I T Y



Ear, Nose, Throat, and Allergy

## Pediatric Tonsillectomy

### What are the tonsils & adenoids?

The tonsils are grape-sized pieces of tissue in the back of the throat on each side. The adenoids are small pads of tissue on the back of the nose above the throat. Both tonsils & adenoids produce antibodies to fight infections. They are usually removed if they become so large that they interfere with breathing or swallowing, or for recurring or chronic infections.

### How long will it take to recover?

After removal of the tonsils & adenoids, your child may lack energy & tire easily for several days. Your child may be restless at night and not sleep well. These problems gradually get better in 7 to 14 days. Your child may have problems with constipation for several days because of the codeine in the pain medication and because he / she will not feel like eating much. Most children run a fever for a few days.

### How will I take care of my child?

1. **Diet.** The most important thing for your child to have in the first 3 days after surgery is liquids. This will help lessen problems with fever, constipation, and healing. Make an effort to give your child a drink (2 or 3 ounces) every hour during waking hours for the first 2 days after surgery. Soft drinks, fruit juice nectars, Jell-O, custard, popsicles, or Gatorade are good choices. Frequent small feedings or soft foods and cool liquids usually are most comfortable. As your child's appetite gets better, encourage him / her to eat solid foods. Let your child have his / her favorite foods, but avoid chips, crackers, and foods with sharp edges. Your child should not drink through a straw after surgery until his / her throat is completely healed. This may increase the risk of bleeding.
2. **Pain Medication.** A very sore throat or **ear pain** is normal after the tonsils are removed. Expect pain in the ears between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> days because the same nerve that goes to the tonsils also goes to the ear. Give regular dose of pain medication (any acetaminophen medicine, such as Tylenol) 4 to 5 times a day for a week. If your child has severe pain, use the prescription pain medication as labeled. **DO NOT USE ASPIRIN or IBUPROFEN** because these medicines increase the chance of bleeding. You can use cool compresses or ice packs on your child's neck to help your child feel more comfortable. You can also have your child suck on ice chips or chew gum. In dry months a humidifier can be placed at bedside to add moisture to the air and soothe the throat.
3. **Fever Medication.** It is normal for children to run a fever between 99F (37C) and 102F (38C) for the first few days after surgery. The fever will be worse if your child does not drink enough liquids and becomes dehydrated. Give acetaminophen for the fever.
4. **Bad Breath.** This is normal. It comes from a white to yellowish scab that forms over the tonsil surgery site.
5. **Bleeding.** There should be no bleeding from the nose or mouth after your child returns home. Get up to check on your child once or twice during the first night after surgery. If there is any bleeding, try gargling with ice water or drinking ice water. If the bleeding does not stop in 20 minutes, take the child to the emergency room immediately. The ENT doctor on call will check your child. Between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> days after surgery, the scabs break off the surgery site and your child may spit up some bloody mucus.
6. **Activity.** It is best for your child to rest at home for the first 48 hours after surgery. Activity may be slowly increased as your child's strength increases. There is no rule for the right time to go back to school, but a guideline is 7 to 10 days after the tonsils are taken out. Rough play & contact sports should not be allowed until 14 days after the tonsil or adenoid surgery. Contact your child's school for make up work.

7. **Other Medications.**

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8. **Follow-up Appointment After Discharge:**

Your child needs to be rechecked and has an appointment on \_\_\_\_\_  
at \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock with \_\_\_\_\_.

**When should I call my child's ENT doctor?**

CALL IMMEDIATELY if:

- There is any bleeding from the mouth or vomiting of blood that does not stop with ice water gargles.
- The fever goes over 102F (39C).
- There are any signs of dehydration.
- Your child has vomiting that lasts more than 12 hours.

CALL DURING OFFICE HOURS if:

- A fever lasts more than 3 days.
- You have other concerns or questions.

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If you feel you need to take your child to an Emergency Room  
please take your child to  
Kosair Children's Hospital

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