

Vail Valley Ear, Nose & Throat Group, P.C.
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CHILD TONSILLECTOMY POST-OP INSTRUCTIONS

The recovery period for a tonsillectomy (with or without an adenoidectomy) is generally 7 to 10 days. Younger children will usually recover quicker than teenagers or adults. The day of surgery is usually not too bad, but, by the 1st or 2nd post op day, the worst of the pain will usually set in. You may also note an increase in pain as the surgical sites are healing, around day 6 or 7. I recommend beginning the pain medicine on the evening after surgery, if not that afternoon. It is better to stay ahead of the pain, rather than fall behind and have to catch up. **You will be given a prescription for Lortab the day of surgery, a liquid pain medication.** For the first few days after surgery, it is best to give the pain medicine regularly, every 4 to 6 hours. I do not recommend waking a child up to give pain medicine, but you may give it at night if your child wakes up and the pain is again severe. Also, for children I recommend no more than 6 doses of the pain medicine in a 24 hour period. Please call the office during office hours if a refill on the pain medicine is needed. You may also have been given a prescription for antibiotics. Follow the directions on the bottles. If any of these medications upset the stomach or if the patient is vomiting, it is best to hold off on these temporarily or altogether if necessary. Tylenol is safe to take if nauseated.

I recommend liquids and soft foods for about 2 weeks after surgery. Children generally prefer cooler liquids and foods. Avoid acidic liquids such as orange or tomato juice, and avoid foods that scratch on the way down such as chips or toast. Ice cream and other milk products will thicken the saliva, so yogurt and sherbets are better. I feel it is generally best to ask your child what sounds good to him or her and go with that. It is very important to keep your child well hydrated, and you should therefore be insistent on getting your child to drink. If he or she is not drinking, please call me and I will arrange for them to be admitted to the hospital for intravenous fluids.

It is not uncommon to experience ear pain in addition to a sore throat. This is called "referred pain" and should be controllable with the pain medicine. It is also fairly common to have a low grade fever (99-101) following surgery. If the fever is > 102, call the office immediately.

Bleeding from the area of the tonsils is my main concern post operatively. It is rare, but it occurs in about 5% of patients regardless of the technique used, and it can be severe. Bleeding is most common within the first 48 hour after surgery or in 7 to 9 days when the scab falls off. When the patient spits or sneezes, it is normal for there to be small amounts of old blood in the mucous or saliva. When true bleeding occurs the patient will either throw up a large amount of old blood (this looks like either dark red blood or coffee grounds) or you will see bright red blood dripping from the nose or mouth. If this occurs, immediately have the patient suck on an ice cube, as the cold may constrict the blood vessel and stop the bleeding. If the bleeding persists for longer than 5 minutes, call my office immediately. As this bleeding can be very dangerous in small children, I insist any child under the age of 12 be in the presence of an adult 24 hours a day for at least 10 days post operatively. This includes having an adult or other responsible person sleep with the child. I recommend older children stay home from school for at least a full week. The patient should also avoid any strenuous physical activity for a full 2 weeks.

We should see the patient about 1 week after surgery. Please call for an appointment, if one has not already been made. Also, do not hesitate to call for any questions or concerns after surgery.