Post-Operative Tonsillectomy

How to care for your child at home:

1. **Fluid Intake:** This is *extremely* important over the next several days to prevent dehydration. Encourage fluid intake throughout the day. All liquids are OK. Small amounts of fluid *every hour* while awake works well. If your child refuses to drink, make sure he or she has taken pain medication. Then, encourage sips of fluids every 5 minutes for 1 to 2 hours, if needed.

   **Suggestions:**
   - Water, juice, Gatorade, soda, milk
   - Milkshakes, smoothies, popsicles, ice cream
   - Puddings, apple sauce, yogurt, Jell-O, soup, watermelon

   **Suggested fluid intake for your child (every hour while awake):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child's Weight</th>
<th>Amount (fluid ounce)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 20 lbs</td>
<td>2 oz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-30 lbs</td>
<td>4 oz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-40 lbs</td>
<td>6 oz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-60 lbs</td>
<td>8 oz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 60 lbs</td>
<td>8 oz</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2. **Diet:** A regular diet can begin immediately with no restrictions. If there is a type of food that your child prefers, regardless of texture or temperature, you can feel comfortable starting it as soon as possible.

   **Chewing** helps to reduce muscle spasm and promotes oral hygiene by increasing salivary flow postoperatively.

   **Suggestions:** gum, gummy bears, fruit chews

3. **Pain:** The pain and discomfort a child experiences after a tonsillectomy varies from a few days to 14 days. The pain may be severe and can be worse at night. Generally each day is better than the previous one. Sometimes around the 5th or 7th day after the operation the child may experience a temporary worsening of pain ("dip") for 1-2 days.

   ![Diagram](image)
The pain control regimen will consist of a combination of Tylenol and Ibuprofen as indicated below

Medications:
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol) should be given every 4 hours for pain
  (Concentration 160mg/5mL - dose:_____mL every 4 hours)
- Ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) to be given every 8 hours for pain
  (Concentration 100mg/5mL - dose:_____mL every 8 hours)

Do not use any other over the counter pain medications, specifically no aspirin, as it can increase the risk of bleeding.

Antibiotics may be prescribed.

4. Activity: Resume normal activity as soon as possible. There is no need for prolonged bed rest. School aged children can return to school as soon as they feel up to it. This may range from 2-7 days after the surgery.

   A note will be given in the recovery room to excuse their days of absence.

   No travel out of town for 2 weeks after surgery.

Frequently Asked Questions:

1) Ear Pain- this can occur after tonsillectomy and is “referred” from the throat. It generally is not an ear infection. Chewing may help reduce some of this discomfort.

2) Temperature- it is not unusual for the temperature to reach 102° in the first few days after surgery. If it is greater than 103°, please call us. Always encourage fluid intake during a fever.

3) White patch over tonsil region- this is the “scab” and is normal. It is not an infection. It will disappear about 10 days after surgery.

4) Bad breath- this may occur and is a normal part of the healing process. It will go away 7 to 10 days after surgery.
5) **Bleeding** - The chance for post-operative bleeding is small (1%-2%).

If it occurs:
- **When**: On the 5\(^{th}\) – 10\(^{th}\) day after the operation.
- **How will you know it**: The child will *spit up or vomit* blood.
- **What do you do**: As this can be a medical emergency we prefer to evaluate all bleeding problems after a tonsillectomy. Please call the ENT office or the Rady Children’s Hospital Operator as described below.

### When should I call the office?

- If your child has not urinated in 12 hours
- Refusal to drink liquids for 12 hours
- A fever of 103 degrees or higher for more than 6 hours that does not go down with acetaminophen or ibuprofen
- Severe pain that is not relieved with pain medication
- Bleeding from the nose, mouth, or vomiting of blood.
- **If there is a medical emergency, call 911.**

8am-5pm Weekdays, call the Triage nurse at 858-309-7706
5pm-8am Weekdays and all day on weekends, call the Rady Children’s Hospital Operator at 858-576-1700 and ask for the ENT after hours.

### Follow-up

You will be asked to complete a form regarding the post-operative recovery and send it back to us. In most cases children do not need to be seen routinely after a tonsillectomy. The doctor will advise you if he/she would like you to return for a follow-up visit. If you feel you would like to have your child seen, please call the office for an appointment.