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Tonsillectomy Postoperative Instructions

Recovery

Most patients recover in 7 - 10 days from a tonsillectomy. Occasionally, patients will do well initially but then get worse for a few days. Expect a sore throat for several days after surgery and a white scab to develop in the back of the throat. Ear pain, bad breath, and/or neck stiffness may be present for several days after surgery. The voice may sound different after surgery and usually improves over several weeks. Snoring and mouth breathing are normal after surgery because of swelling and should resolve in 10-14 days.

Diet

It is important to keep well hydrated after surgery. Taking small frequent sips is often easier than trying to get down a large glass all at once. Children will often need encouragement and at times even stern reinforcement. Do not let them dictate how much they want to eat or drink. Start with clear liquids such as juices or Popsicles (avoid red colored liquids.) If this is well tolerated, progress to soft foods for the first few days. Avoid hard foods, especially those that may contain sharp edges such as potato chips or pretzels. Foods that are generally not tolerated are temperature hot foods and spicy hot foods. A small amount of weight loss can happen. Occasionally, when drinking, liquid may come out of the nose. This will typically disappear within a few days.

Activity

Restrict activity in the first week (but not bedridden). Light activity is fine for the second week. Heavy lifting and physical exercise should be avoided until two weeks after surgery. No travel out of the area for two weeks after surgery. Children under 16 must remain at home with a responsible adult for 2 weeks after surgery.

Medications

Resume medications that were taken prior to surgery. Avoid medications containing aspirin. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or Ibuprofen (follow guidelines on the bottle) should be used for mild pain or fever. Take the antibiotics until they are finished and the pain medications as necessary. Avoid taking pain medication on an empty stomach as this can cause nausea.

Concerns

Bleeding - May occur anytime until healing is complete (usually two weeks). Call the office if there is any nasal or oral bleeding. Brisk bleeding can be frightening and dangerous. If this happens, do not panic. Call the doctor's office immediately and go to the nearest emergency room for treatment.

Fever- A low grade fever is normal for several days after surgery and should be treated with acetaminophen or acetaminophen with codeine, whichever your doctor has prescribed. Please call the office if the temperature is over 102°F.

Vomiting - Some patients suffer nausea and vomiting from the general anesthetic. This usually occurs during the first 24 - 36 hours after surgery. Call the office if this persists.

Follow Up

Should be arranged for 2 - 3 weeks after surgery. Please call the office if an appointment has not already been arranged.