



EAST IDAHO EAR NOSE & THROAT

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Tonsillectomy & Adenoidectomy: Instructions After Surgery

What should I expect after surgery?

Children will often have a **bad sore throat** for up to two weeks after the operation. This is often worse between day 3 and 5, when the “scab” in the back of the throat falls off. The more a child drinks, the better they will feel. However, they may need to be pushed to drink initially to overcome the pain.

It is very common for children who have had this surgery to have **ear pain**, since the same nerves go to the ears and the throat. You also may notice bad breath as the tonsil site heals over. If you look in the child’s mouth, you will see a white, yellow or grey patch where the tonsils were - this is the scab, and is normal.

It is also common for these children to have a “**nasal**” voice for several weeks to a month after the operation. This is because there is more room in the back of the throat, resulting in more airflow through the nose during speech. Most children compensate for this as the palate (the roof of the mouth) adjusts to make a seal during speech. If this persists for more than a month, call my office for further evaluation.

What medication is necessary after the surgery?

Tylenol and Ibuprofen are used for pain relief. Judicious use of codeine or other narcotic pain medication is important, since side effects include nausea, vomiting and constipation. However, do not be afraid to use it if necessary for pain relief. Some pain medications can cause bleeding, which can be very serious after tonsil surgery.

Antibiotics are often given after this operation to reduce the odor and bad taste of the healing tonsil beds. If your child has problems taking the antibiotics, check with me to see if they can be stopped.

What should my child eat and drink after the surgery?

It is very important for your child to drink fluids, to **avoid becoming dehydrated**. Liquids with nutritional value (such as milk shakes) are better, since they also provide calories if the child isn’t eating much. Drinks such as Gatorade or Pedialyte are better than water, since they provide needed nutrients. Some of these (such as Pedialyte) are available as ice pops, which may be better for a child recovering from surgery.

I do not restrict the type or temperature of liquids- find something they like and keep them drinking. If there is a concern that a child is becoming dehydrated (for example, if the urine becomes dark or reduced in quantity), contact my office. Rarely, admission to the hospital for intravenous fluids will be necessary.

I do not put any particular restrictions on the type of food that a child eats, with one exception. “Sharp” foods like chips, pretzels or pizza crust **must be avoided for two weeks**, as they can cause bleeding.

What do I do in case of bleeding?

Bleeding is potentially serious, and any amount of blood in the mouth or nose within 2 weeks of surgery should be evaluated. Call my office if it is a small amount of bleeding. If it is a larger amount, I would prefer you to go to the nearest Emergency Room.

Can my child swim, go to school, or engage in other activities?

Once children are feeling better, there is no medical reason to restrict moderate activity. Extreme activities (such as weight lifting or competitive athletics) should be avoided as they may raise the blood pressure and cause bleeding during the two weeks after the operation. They can go back to school as soon as they feel well enough, just make sure that the teacher and/or school nurse knows that they had surgery.

Can my child travel after surgery?

Your child should not be anywhere where they couldn't get to a hospital quickly (within 30 minutes) for two weeks after surgery, in case of bleeding. This means that during this time, there should be no air travel, ship travel, or any other travel where it would be hard to get rapid medical help (such as camping, etc...).

What about follow up?

The follow up visit is three weeks after the surgery. In many cases, this visit is not absolutely necessary. If your child is eating, sleeping and speaking normally, you may just contact the office where your child was last seen to check and see if you need to come in for a follow up appointment.

Follow up visit is scheduled for _____ at _____ at East Idaho Ear Nose Throat.

Emergency

If your child has a medical emergency, go directly to the nearest emergency medical facility, or call 911.