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Tonsillectomy Post-operative Instructions

After tonsillectomy, there are several aspects of care that are important. The first is hydration and nutrition. Hydration is very important the first several days after surgery. This should consist of ample liquids (juices, milk, and sport drinks) to ensure urination at least twice/three times daily. Adequate urine output varies with age and size of the patient but this is a reasonable starting point. Drinking during the day: one glass of fluids every hour x2 weeks, and during the night: drink at least 4-5 good gulps every 2-2 ½ hrs x 2 weeks. Soft food intake can begin as soon as the patient can tolerate soft solids. This typically lags behind liquid intake. Foods should be soft and cool initially. Hard, sharp or brittle foods such as chips, peanuts, popcorn should be avoided for at least 2 weeks. These foods may dislodge healing crusts and result in bleeding. Ice cream, yogurt, milkshakes, pudding and popsicles are fine, often soothing the site of discomfort. The use of straws should be avoided. Pain control should consist of regular doses of acetaminophen (Tylenol) or a prescribed narcotic pain medicine. Aspirin or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications such as Ibuprofen, Motrin, Naprosyn, Advil etc. should not be used because they increase the risk of bleeding. Pain control should be tailored to the patient and some may require scheduled (every 4 hours) dosing rather than dosing based upon demand. Narcotics often cause nausea and vomiting, especially early in the postoperative period when lingering effects of general anesthesia are present. They should be taken with food or fluids to minimize nausea and vomiting. Your physician, perhaps in suppository form, may prescribe medications that reduce nausea and vomiting, such as Phenergan or Zofran. Pain medications can also cause constipation. If this occurs, increase fiber intake. MiraLAX or Dulcolax can be taken as well. Low-grade fever is normal after tonsillectomy. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) may be used for fever reduction. Narcotic pain medicines are usually combined with acetaminophen so they too reduce fever. Rarely, high fever may be indicative of a more serious problem. To further address this, you should contact your physician for any fever greater than 101.5 F that does not respond to Tylenol or your pain medicine. Bleeding occurs in approximately 3-5% of patients after tonsillectomy. This usually occurs 5-8 days after surgery as a complication of healing when the crust in the throat sloughs. For any bleeding, you should contact your physician to determine the next appropriate step. This may require a visit to the emergency department and sometimes evaluation in the operating room, depending on the severity of the bleeding.

Please schedule an appointment to see your doctor 2-3 weeks after surgery.

The days following surgery:

- At least 5-7 days of rest is required. Avoid heavy lifting or physical exertion until your doctor permits you to do so.
- Gargling or excessive clearing of the throat should be avoided.
- Take in lots of fluids!! Children may require significant attention to remain hydrated. It is normal to have some difficulty encouraging smaller children to drink. If this occurs, please contact your physician's office so that arrangements may be made to bring the patient into the office for assistance.
- Foods: Avoid harsh citrus fruit juices such as orange, lemon, pineapple juices. Avoid hot and highly seasoned foods. Please avoid sharp foods such as bacon, crackers, and dry toast.
 - a. Day of Surgery -Take in abundant quantities of liquids including water, jell-o, and sherbert.
 - b. Day after Surgery -May add malted milks, chocolate pudding, cottage cheese, or cream cheese.

c. Days 3 and 4 after Surgery -May add soft cereal, mashed potatoes, pureed vegetables, and eggs.

- There are no bathing restrictions.
- If there have been no complications, you may return to work or school in 7 - 10 days, but please continue to limit physical activities for up to two weeks.
- Call your doctor's office for a follow-up appointment.

Answers to FAQ's regarding post-operative issues:

- A sore throat and earache upon swallowing are to be expected. Encouraging fluids and foods will speed recovery.
- A mild elevation in temperature is usually an indication of not taking in enough fluids.
- Mouth odor may be observed for 7 to 10 days and is usually relieved by adequate fluid intake.
- Call your physician's office if bleeding from the throat, temperature elevation above 101 degrees, severe constant earache, or a persistent cough develops.
- Breathing complications with children after general anesthesia occur rarely. The symptoms are croupy sounds when breathing in, noisy gasping sounds or abdominal tension with breathing.
- If you were given steroids during surgery or prescribed steroids after surgery, you may experience an elevation in anxiety or sleep disturbances. Less common symptoms are hallucinations.
- With all patients, common symptoms with narcotics/pain medications are itching without rash and nausea. If rash or vomiting develop after taking a medication please contact your physician.

Medications:

- If your doctor ordered medication, take them as he or she directed. If you have questions regarding your medication, please check with your pharmacist or doctor.
- Tylenol may be adequate for children.
- Do not take Aspirin products, or Motrin/Advil/Ibuprofen.
- Do not drive or operate any machinery or drink alcoholic beverages while taking narcotics.
- In older children or adults, an ice collar or cold compress to the neck may be soothing