



Tonsil and Adenoid Surgery

Before surgery

Use acetaminophen (Tylenol) for fever or pain, if needed, the 5 days before tonsil or adenoid surgery. Do not give ibuprofen, naproxen or aspirin to your child before surgery.

Tonsil surgery

What to expect after surgery

You may notice foul-smelling breath for about 10 days after surgery; this is part of the healing process.

Swelling of the tongue or palate should go away in about a week. The throat may have gray-white or white patches for a while. (This is a scab that develops as healing begins). You may notice a change in voice and/or snoring habits. This should decrease in a few weeks.

Will my child have any pain?

Some pain and discomfort is normal. Your child may complain of earache, sore neck, sore throat or sore tongue. Give pain medicine on a regular basis for the first few days and nights. Use the prescribed pain medicine, Tylenol or generic (store-brand) acetaminophen according to the package instructions. **DO not** use aspirin. Chewing gum may help a sore throat.

Will my child have a fever?

A slightly high temperature, 99 F to 100 F, is common for the first several days after surgery. Call the doctor or nurse if the fever goes above 102 F for more than 6 to 8 hours.

What about bleeding?

Bleeding can occur 5 to 10 days after surgery as the scabs heal and fall off. Small amounts of brown-colored mucus are okay. **If it turns bright red or if your child begins vomiting large amounts of blood, call your doctor and immediately report to the emergency room.**

What can my child eat?

Liquids are important! When a child does not get enough liquids after surgery, it may cause more pain, fever and weight loss — as much as six to ten pounds.

While your child is awake, encourage sips of liquid every 15 to 30 minutes. Give clear, cool liquids the first day (apple juice, Jell-O, Popsicles). Pop or citrus drinks sometimes irritate the throat, and are easier to drink if you add some water. If your child is vomiting, give only clear liquids (those you can see through). Call your doctor if vomiting lasts beyond 24 hours.

Your child may progress to a regular diet the evening of surgery as tolerated. Some children return to solid foods more quickly than others.

Chewing and swallowing will help promote healing. There are no restrictions on solids, except no highly spicy foods. Always remember to give plenty of liquids.

What about activities?

Quiet activities around the house are best for the first few days. Some children feel better in two to three days, others in one to two weeks. We recommend no vigorous activity or sports for seven days.

Post-operative warning signs

Call your doctor if your child has:

- A fever over 102 F that does not decrease after Tylenol
- No urination for 12 hours
- Bleeding from the mouth of more than one tablespoon
- Vomiting old blood
- Vomiting that lasts more than 24 hours
- Abdominal pain
- Restlessness
- Extreme irritability

Adenoid surgery

What changes should I expect?

You may see a small amount of reddish drainage from the nose. The nose can be stuffy for one week. It is *not* normal to see a constant drip or bright red drainage. If this occurs, call your doctor or nurse. Foul-smelling breath is common for the first week to 10 days after surgery.

Will my child have any pain?

Mild pain and discomfort is normal. Your child may complain of a sore neck or ear pain. Use the prescribed pain medicine, Tylenol or generic (store-brand) acetaminophen according to the package instructions as needed for pain. **Do not** use aspirin. Constant or extreme pain is unusual; please call your doctor if this continues.

Will my child have a fever?

A higher temperature, 99 F to 100 F, is common for the first 1 to 2 days. Call the doctor or nurse if the fever goes above 102 F for more than 6 to 8 hours.

To Learn More

- Otolaryngology Clinic
206-987-2105
- Your child's
healthcare provider
- www.seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask
your child's nurse.
- From outside the
hospital, call the
toll-free Family
Interpreting Line
1-866-583-1527. Tell
the interpreter the
name or extension you
need.
- For Deaf and hard of
hearing callers
206-987-2280 (TTY)

Call your doctor if your child has:

- A constant drip or red drainage from the nose
- Extreme pain that won't go away
- A fever of 102 F or higher

What can my child eat?

After your child's adenoid surgery, you may progress to a regular diet the evening of surgery. Thick liquids (milkshakes, pudding, milk) may be more comfortable the first few days, as some thin liquids may go up your child's nose after surgery.

If your child is vomiting, give only clear liquids. Call your doctor if vomiting lasts longer than 24 hours.

What about activities?

Your child may begin regular activities in a couple of days, as they feel fit.