



# INSTRUCTIONS AFTER TONSILLECTOMY AND/OR ADENOIDECTOMY

Your tonsils and adenoid region will heal over a three-week period. Most healing is accomplished within the first seven days.

## **PAIN/DISCOMFORT**

It is normal to have a shaggy gray or tan coating at the back of the mouth and bad breath during this time. You may experience moderate discomfort or pain in the first 24 to 48 hours. Generally, the pain is worse at night. This should be controlled with the medication prescribed to you (Tylenol® with codeine, or Lortab elixir).

Once the discomfort or pain improves, you may find that plain Tylenol is sufficient during the day. You should not take plain Tylenol within four hours of Lortab or Tylenol with codeine, as these narcotic prescription drugs already contain Tylenol.

An ice pack or frozen peas in a bag alongside the neck may also help to relieve pain.

Beginning on days four through seven after the operation, you may experience ear pain. Generally, this is referred pain from the throat and will resolve as the tonsillar/throat area heals.

Jaw pain may occur after the first three days. This is often due to inflammation and resulting immobility around the muscles, which open and close the mouth. In addition to Tylenol, any oral motion such as chewing gum, swallowing or drinking may be helpful.

## **NAUSEA**

Nausea is quite common after surgery and may be associated with several factors including the anesthetic medication or the pain medication (codeine or lortab). Nausea and vomiting generally resolve after the first 12 hours.

Some tips to help you deal with nausea:

- Avoid taking narcotic pain medications on a completely empty stomach.
- If nausea or vomiting occur shortly after a dose of codeine or lortab, then try taking plain Tylenol until the nausea improves.
- Some patients find that small sips of ginger ale or a cola drink may help to relieve nausea. Small portions of bananas, applesauce, moistened graham crackers or soda crackers may be helpful prior to taking medications.
- You may wish to avoid acidic products such as orange juice.

## **FEVER**

A low-grade fever is common, especially in children after anesthesia. This fever typically occurs in the late afternoon or evening and may reach 100 degrees fahrenheit.

Fevers usually improve with the prescription pain reliever or Tylenol. For temperatures higher than 100° F, please contact Dr. McCaffery or the physician on call.

## **BLEEDING FROM THE NOSE**

There is a risk of bleeding during the first three weeks after surgery. The risk is generally highest in the first 24 hours, then four to 10 days after surgery when the eschar or scab begins to fall off.

You may experience drainage of a small amount of old, bloody mucus from the nose. Red blood is generally new and you should contact Dr. McCaffery if this occurs. Old blood from the nose is generally brown and of less concern. This should resolve after the first 24 hours.

**Pediatric and Adult ENT | Certified, American Board of Otolaryngology  
Disorders of the Ears, Nose, Throat, Sinuses, Voice, Hearing, Dizziness, Head and Neck Surgery**  
Dr. John McCaffery is President of Hearing Services of Santa Barbara and contracts with them for Audiologic services.

## **BLEEDING FROM THE MOUTH**

You should contact Dr. McCaffery immediately if you experience any bleeding from the mouth or if you notice a red or purple clot in the mouth or throat. If you are unable to contact Dr. McCaffery immediately then you should call 911 or proceed to the nearest emergency room.

## **DIET**

As a rule, one should begin with clear liquids such as ice chips or water then advance in color and texture until a soft diet is tolerated. Although fluid intake is important, in most cases the patient receives enough intravenous fluid during the operation to maintain them for the first 24 hours following the procedure. If, after 24 hours, the patient is unable to drink, then you should contact Dr. McCaffery.

Tips for maintaining fluid intake:

- Begin with sips of water or ice chips or your child's favorite juice.
- Gatorade is an excellent fluid source and may also be frozen in cubes or ice chips.
- Classic favorites such as popsicles, smoothies, ice cream, frozen yogurt, yogurt, ice cream shakes and other frozen drinks are usually tolerated well.
- Once the patient tolerates liquids then the diet may be advanced. Avoid hot (temperature) liquids or foods. After the first 18 hours, lukewarm foods are allowed. Some suggestions include: Lukewarm soup, macaroni or pastas, eggs or other materials that are soft.
- A soft diet should be maintained for three weeks to minimize risk of postoperative bleeding.
- Do not eat sharp foods such as chips and avoid using straws which might hit the back of the throat and cause bleeding.
- You may brush the front of your teeth but do not brush at the back, as this may promote bleeding.
- Do not allow children or run/walk with any objects such as straws in their mouth.

## **ACTIVITY**

No strenuous or athletic activity is allowed during the three weeks following surgery. This includes any activity that may cause a significant elevation in the heart rate or blood pressure. Children should not participate in gym or PE (physical education) classes during this time.

## **TRAVEL**

During this three-week postoperative period, travel outside of a 30 minute radius from Santa Barbara is not recommended.

## **GARGLING**

Rinsing your mouth with cool water or mouthwash is sometimes helpful.

## **MEDICATIONS:**

Pain medication \_\_\_\_\_ as prescribed.

Antibiotic \_\_\_\_\_ to be taken as directed.

**FOLLOW-UP APPOINTMENT:** Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

## **EMERGENCIES**

If you have any questions or concerns, then you may contact Dr. McCaffery through the office number (805) 964-6926. If Dr. McCaffery is unavailable, a doctor on call will be listed on the office message.

If you are unable to contact the doctor and there is an emergency, you should call 911 or proceed to the nearest emergency room \_\_\_\_\_ For your school, if applicable.

You should not attend school until eight days after your tonsillectomy.

You should not engage in physical education or "gym" for 20 days from the date of your tonsillectomy. This includes NO running, jumping, diving or activities involving height.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_