



POST OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS FOR TONSILLECTOMY OR ADENOTONSILLECTOMY

The tonsils and adenoids are made of lymphoid tissue, forming part of our immune system. The tonsils are two clumps of tissue on each side of the throat, if they become enlarged or infected they can cause recurrent throat infection or tonsillitis, bad breath, difficulty eating and drinking as well as snoring and sleep disordered breathing. The adenoid is a clump of tissue at the back of the nose, if it is enlarged or infected, it can lead to a blocked nose, recurrent infections, ear infections and hearing problems and snoring at night.

During tonsillectomy, the tonsils will be accessed via the mouth and dissected away from the pocket at the side of the palate using coblation diathermy to cauterize blood vessels. Infrequently, a suture may be used to tie off any bleeding points, but most cases require no sutures. To remove the adenoids, a special suction diathermy instrument is used to remove the tissue, again with no sutures required. The operation usually takes around 20-30 minutes in total. After tonsillectomy/adenotonsillectomy, an overnight stay in hospital is usually required for observation (some patients may be discharged on the same day if they meet certain criteria, as decided by the surgeon).

Recovery from tonsillectomy involves 7-10 days of moderate throat discomfort, occasionally with associated earache. Panadol, Painstop (for children) or Panadeine may be sufficient to relieve pain but you may also be prescribed some stronger medication to take for severe pain or prior to going to bed. Do not take aspirin or diclofenac, as these can all increase bleeding risk. An antibiotic will also be given to prevent infection; infection is one of the causes of post-tonsillectomy bleeding.

Bleeding after tonsillectomy is rare but can occur up to 14 days post-tonsillectomy. Small spots of blood on the tonsillar fossae may be seen but if any active bleeding occurs you must attend your nearest ED immediately and contact your surgeon using the phone number below. Persistent spitting or vomiting of blood is not normal and it is important that this bleeding be stopped as soon as possible.

A normal diet including solids is encouraged to help with the healing process. It is best to avoid acidic foods, eg: oranges and lemons as these may cause pain. Chewing gum can also help with healing by keeping the throat moving. The tonsillar fossae will be coated with a thick white-coloured 'slough' - do not be alarmed, this is normal. There may also be some black patches where the tissue has been cauterised.

Avoid school, work, sport and any other strenuous activity for 14 days and please ask for a medical certificate if required.