



Patient & Family Guide
2019

After Your Child's Tonsillectomy and/or Adenoidectomy Surgery

Valley Regional Hospital



www.nshealth.ca

After Your Child's Tonsillectomy and/or Adenoidectomy Surgery

What will happen after the surgery?

Tonsillectomy and/or adenoidectomy surgery takes about 20-40 minutes. The surgeon will talk with you soon after the surgery is over. They will give you an update and specific instructions for after surgery. Your child will be cared for by a nurse before and after surgery, and the nurse will be able to answer most of the questions you may have.

Can my child go home after surgery?

- Most children can go home on the day of the surgery. Some children may need to stay in the hospital overnight for observation.
- Children under 3 years old and children with other medical problems should be scheduled for overnight observation. If you live more than an hour away from the hospital, you may need to make arrangements to stay closer to the hospital on the first night. Please talk about this with your surgeon.
- Your child may be prescribed medication. The nurse will give you the prescriptions before you leave the hospital.

How will my child feel after surgery?

- Your child's throat may be very sore after surgery. The pain may last for up to 14 days (2 weeks).
- Your child may tell you that they have pain, or they may show you by spitting, drooling, not wanting to swallow, or refusing to drink. It is important to keep your child comfortable by giving them pain medication.
- You should use acetaminophen (Tylenol®) at home for pain – liquid Tylenol® is easiest to swallow. You may have to use a dropper (syringe) if your child will not drink Tylenol® from a cup. Your child may have an easier time drinking liquids half an hour or so after taking pain medication.
- **Do not** give your child ASA (Aspirin®), ibuprofen (Advil®), or naproxen (Aleve®) because they can increase the chance of bleeding after surgery. Check the dose of pain medication carefully to give your child the right amount.

What can I do to help with the pain?

- Don't let your child lie flat. Prop them up with an extra pillow. Sitting upright will let your child breathe easier and help reduce swelling.
- Keeping your child's throat moist will help to lessen their pain. Have fluids nearby for your child at all times so they will drink often. A humidifier in your child's room may also help to keep their throat moist.
- Earaches are common as the body heals after surgery. An earache may last up to 10 days. An ice collar can help to reduce pain and may be soothing for some children. You can make an ice collar by placing ice cubes and water in a large Ziploc[®] bag, and wrapping it in a towel. Gently lay the ice pack on the front of your child's neck. The ice pack can stay on as long as the child feels comfortable. Do not force your child to wear it or apply pressure.

What can my child eat after surgery?

- It's important that your child gets enough fluid to keep their throat moist. This will help to lessen pain and make swallowing easier.
- Letting them pick out a new special sippy cup or water bottle from the store may help.
- Your child will likely want only liquids for the first few days after surgery. Try giving them water, juice, popsicles, and Jell-O®. Be sure to watch your child when they are eating popsicles, to make sure they don't hurt the back of their throat. You may also offer ice cream, milkshakes, yogurt, and pudding. As your child starts to feel better, you can add other soft foods.
- **Do not** give your child sharp foods (e.g., crackers, potato chips) for about 10 days after surgery. If your child has a favourite food and it can be chewed well and swallowed easily, then it is probably OK to eat.

Please remember that an upset stomach and vomiting (throwing up) are common in the first 1-2 days after surgery. **But if it's severe (very bad) or lasts for more than 2 days, get medical care. Call 811, contact your family doctor, or go to the nearest Emergency Department.**

What activities can my child do after surgery?

- Your child should do quiet activities for 7-10 days. For 2 weeks, your child should not jump, run, swim, bike, play in a gym, or play organized sports.
- Your child should not be with anyone who has a cold or fever. They will be able to go back to daycare or school within 1-2 weeks. Please talk about this with your doctor.
- Your child should try not to cough, clear their throat, or blow their nose forcefully for 10 days after surgery because this could hurt their throat. They can spit gently into a tissue, if needed.

What are your questions?

Please ask. We are here to help you.

What else can I expect?

- It is normal for your child to have bad breath after surgery. This will get better as their throat heals. Your child may brush their teeth carefully with an adult watching them closely. Encourage them to take their time and be gentle.
- The tonsil area will look grey or white – this is normal. Your child may vomit after surgery. There may be old, dark brown blood in the vomit. If your child clears their throat, there may be some pink or brown-stained mucus. This is normal.
- If your child does not drink any fluids or pee for 24 hours, they may be dehydrated. Go to the nearest Emergency Department, because your child might need IV fluids.

It is NOT normal for your child to have: bright red blood in their throat, mouth, nose, saliva (spit), or vomit. This can be a sign of bleeding. A tiny amount of bright red blood (e.g., on their pillow or a tissue) is OK, like a bit of fresh blood when a scab comes off. If the new bleeding continues, **call 911 or take your child to the nearest Emergency Department** right away. This may happen up to 2 weeks after surgery.

Followup appointment

- Before leaving the hospital, we will give you a followup appointment with your child's surgeon. This appointment is usually 4 weeks after surgery.
- If you have questions about the surgery, please call the surgeon's office:
 - › **Dr. Kujath:** 902-678-4233
 - › **Dr. Taylor:** 902-678-4233

Call your doctor or go to the nearest Emergency Department right away if your child:

- › has severe pain that isn't helped by pain medication
- › has vomiting that doesn't stop
- › has a fever over 38.5° C or 101° F for more than 24 hours
- › has bright red bleeding
- › refuses to take any liquids

We highly recommend that your child be cared for in a smoke-free environment. Please do not smoke in your car or at home, and ask others not to smoke around your child as this can slow your child's healing.

Checklist for parents

- Do you have any questions or concerns about your child's condition or surgery?
- Do you have any questions about how to care for your child at home?
- Do you have any questions about your child's pain medication? Do you know how much medication to give and when?
- Do you know if your child needs a followup appointment with their doctor?

**What are your questions? Please ask.
We are here to help you.**

**In Nova Scotia you can call 811 to talk with
a registered nurse about your health care
questions 24/7.**

Compliments? Concerns?

We want to know!

Safe care and quality service is our goal.

We value your feedback.

Call our Patient Satisfaction Line at:

902-679-2494 or (toll-free) 1-800-866-9757

Looking for more health information?

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here: <http://library.nshealth.ca/PatientGuides>

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.

For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time: call 811 or visit <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

Nova Scotia Health Authority promotes a smoke-free, vape-free, and scent-free environment.

Please do not use perfumed products. Thank you!

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Prepared by: ENT Surgeons, Valley Regional Hospital

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The information is not intended to be and does not constitute health care or medical advice.

If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.