

# Tonsil and/or Adenoid Surgery for children:

## *Information about the Operation*

### What are tonsils?

The tonsils are lumps of tissue located on either side of the back of the throat. They are part of the body's immune system and are designed to stop bacteria and viruses from entering the body through the mouth.

### What are adenoids?

Adenoids are lumps of tissue located in the passage that connects the nose to the throat, but you can't see them when you look inside your child's mouth. Adenoids are designed to stop bacteria and viruses from entering the body through the nose.

### Why does my child need this operation?

Surgery to remove the tonsils and/or adenoids is recommended when there have been repeated throat infections or when the tonsils are enlarged and are interfering with normal breathing, especially during sleep. A specialized surgeon (an otolaryngologist/head and neck surgeon) will perform the operation. After surgery, your child should have fewer ear and throat infections and have improved breathing during sleep.

### Before the operation

Several hours before surgery, your child will need to stop eating and drinking. You will be given specific instructions for this. If your child is between 4 and 12 year of age, please schedule a Dr. Bear Pre-Admission Tour with your surgeon's office.

### During the operation

Sleep medicine (general anaesthesia) will be given to your child by the anesthetist. This will ensure your child stays asleep and does not feel any pain during the operation. The surgeon will remove the tonsils through your child's mouth. If your child is also having their adenoids removed, this will be done at the same time. The operation usually takes 45 - 60 minutes.

### After the operation

After the operation, your child will be taken to the Post Anaesthetic Care Unit (PACU) where they will be closely monitored by the nursing staff. Your child will have an intervenous line. As soon as your child is awake, a volunteer will escort one parent into the PACU to be with your child. Once your child is stable, you will accompany your child either back to the Surgical Day Care Unit or to a room on the children's nursing unit if you are staying in hospital overnight.

### Pain and Drinking

It is important that your child receives pain medication regularly, even when they do not ask for it. Your child will have a sore throat and possibly an earache when they wake up. The nurses will give your child pain medication for this. Not only does the medication make your child feel better, but it also makes drinking more comfortable. The most recent recommendation for the management of pain after a tonsillectomy/adenoidectomy is to give both acetaminophen (Tylenol®) and ibuprofen (Advil®), on a regular schedule. If you receive a prescription for morphine it should be used sparingly when the acetaminophen and ibuprofen are not controlling the pain. Taking frequent sips of fluid is extremely important after the operation. Your child will be offered sips of clear fluids, ice chips and Freezies. Drinking fluids keeps the throat moist which eases the pain, promotes healing and prevents dehydration. Do not give your child products with red, brown or purple food colouring (e.g. popsicles, Freezies, Jello, juice). Do not give your child a straw for drinking.

### When can my child go home?

Most children will be able to go home once they are awake and drinking sips of liquid (usually 4 - 6 hours). Some very young children or those with sleeping disorders may be required to spend the night at the hospital. Occasionally, children may vomit after the operation. This is common, and sometimes, the vomit may appear thick, and brownish in colour. Children who experience an upset stomach or vomiting after surgery will receive medicine to help settle the stomach.

### How to prepare

- Purchase Dye Free acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol®) and ibuprofen (e.g. Advil®) to be given regularly for pain.
- Take your child grocery shopping for clear fluids such as apple juice, broth soup, Popsicles/Freezies, and soft foods such as noodles, eggs, yogurt, mashed potatoes, oatmeal and pudding. Do not purchase products with red, brown or purple food colouring.
- Place a humidifier in your child's room. This will add moisture to the air and help keep the throat moist.
- Plan for your child to stay at home for a minimum of 7 - 10 days after the operation.



# Tonsil and Adenoid Surgery in Children: Discharge Instructions

## Drinking and Eating

Drinking is important for your child after surgery. Fluids soothe the throat, and keep the area clean and moist which helps with healing. In the first few days offer your child cold drinks and soft, cool foods, including ice chips, popsicles, Freezies, and Jello. If your child is drinking well, do not be concerned if several days pass before their appetite returns to normal. Children who have only had adenoids removed will return to a normal diet more quickly.

Do not give your child products with red, brown or purple food colouring (e.g. popsicles, Freezies, Jello, juice). Avoid hot, spicy, acidic, or dry foods that might irritate the throat such as toast, crackers, tomatoes, orange juice and lemonade.

Do not give your child a straw for drinking.

## Medication

It is important that your child receives regular pain medication at home, even when they do not ask for it. Not only does the medication make your child feel better, but it also makes drinking more comfortable. Your child will have a sore throat and possibly an earache for several days or longer, and can last up to two weeks. Sometimes, pain worsens five or six days after the operation before it starts to improve. Give pain medication as prescribed by your child's surgeon. The most recent recommendation is to give both acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol®) & ibuprofen (e.g. Advil®) every six hours for five days following surgery. We recommend that you alternate these medications so your child receives medication every three hours. For example, give Tylenol® at 8am, Advil® at 11am, Tylenol® at 2pm, Advil® at 5pm etc. You may also receive a prescription for liquid Morphine because occasionally, a child requires stronger pain medication. You can monitor your child's response to Tylenol®/Advil® and then purchase the Morphine if needed. If you do give your child Morphine, it should be used with caution and only given as directed by your physician. Most children require less pain medication after five days. You will be provided with a medication journal to keep track of medicine you have given and to remind you when the next dose is due. Mixing medication with food is not recommended.

DO NOT give homeopathic and herbal remedies unless approved by your child's surgeon as these can cause bleeding.

## Activity

It is best for your child to remain relatively calm for one week after the operation. Your child may bathe as normal. Strenuous play including swimming and contact sports should be avoided until approved by the surgeon. Contact with people who have infections such as colds and coughs should be avoided. Your child should not go on long trips out of town for 2 weeks after the operation and should stay within one hour of a hospital.

Your child may return to school from anywhere from 7-14 days. Your child's surgeon will tell you what is right for your child.

## Special Instructions

**Mouth Care:** A white coating usually develops over the tonsil area. This is normal. Mouth odour may be present for a few days after surgery. Gently brushing of the teeth is permitted. Discourage gargling and frequent coughing as this may cause bleeding. Oral rinses including hydrogen peroxide are not recommended and may be dangerous to your child.

**Fever, Bleeding and Nausea:** Following surgery, your child may have a slight fever (38° C or 100° F) for 4 – 5 days. A fever over 38.5°C or 101.3°F should be reported to a doctor. Bleeding is uncommon but may occur up to two weeks after surgery. Any obvious bleeding should be reported to a doctor. Some children experience nausea after the operation. If nausea is preventing your child from drinking, or if your child is vomiting, please notify a doctor.

## Follow-Up

Schedule a follow-up appointment as instructed by your surgeon, usually one week from date of surgery.

**Call your surgeon's office during business hours or go to the nearest emergency department if:**

- There is any blood coming from the nose or mouth or your child vomits dark brown fluid
- Your child does not pass urine for more than 12 hours after surgery
- Your child has a fever over 38.5°C or 101.3°F
- You feel your child is becoming dehydrated.

**NOTE:** Please bring this information sheet with you if you need to take your child to the emergency department.

## Important numbers to keep handy:

Surgeon's Name and Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Doctor Name and Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Closest Hospital Name and Address: \_\_\_\_\_

