

## **POST-OPERATIVE ADVICE**

### **What to expect and do after a Tonsillectomy and/or Adenoidectomy**

The operation usually gets done as a day case, so you will be back home on the same day. Immediately after your child leaves the recovery room he/she will still be a bit sleepy. A sister will monitor their condition in the ward, and as soon as they are happy that the child can eat and drink and that there is no vomiting the child can be discharged.

#### **Back home:**

The child should be kept at home for the next few days. A week is usually enough time for them to recover, and if needed, a sick certificate for school will be provided.

#### **Pain and pain control:**

You should be in no doubt that a tonsillectomy is a painful procedure. Some children will also complain of pain in the ears. This is called 'referred pain' and is not an ear infection.

We will provide you with a script for pain medicine, which can range from syrups to suppositories. This will last you for a week and should be taken routinely during this time. Try and time the taking of painkillers about 30 minutes before a meal to make swallowing a bit easier.

#### **Food and drink:**

It is of extreme importance that your child starts and continues to eat and drink normally as soon as possible. There is no real evidence to prove that one type of diet is better than another, but I suggest keeping away from the spicy, hot and acidic food and drinks for the first week. I don't really care *what* they eat or drink, as long as they *do* eat and drink!

#### **Things that are normal in this period:**

- **Smelly breath**
  - This is due to the white patches or 'scabs' that form on the raw area where the tonsils were removed. They break off and get swallowed in about 10 days after the operation.
- **Ear pain**
  - The same nerve that supplies sensation to the throat runs through the ear, and the brain can get confused where the pain really comes from. It is called referred pain.
- **Low grade fever**
  - This is normal for most surgeries.
- **Worsening of snoring**
  - This is due to the swelling in the back of the throat and nose after the operation. As soon as this goes down the breathing will be better.

## **When to call your doctor or go to the emergency department:**

- **Bleeding**
  - There might be a little bit of blood seen from the nose or in the saliva just after the operation. This is still normal.
  - Any *bright red* blood coming from the nostrils and/or mouth is concerning and you should call your doctor to discuss this.
- **Vomiting**
  - Most children swallow blood in the throat, especially if there is a slight trickle. One vomit of old blood in the first few hours after the operation can still be seen as normal, but persistent vomiting should be brought under the attention of your doctor.
- **Infection**
  - Let your doctor know if your child develops a new fever a few (5-7) days after the operation. This might indicate that the raw areas have become infected. Usually it will seem like the recovery phase is worsening again, and pain might return. There might even see some streaks or flecks of blood in the saliva.

## **Some further information:**

- I do not prescribe antibiotics to be taken after the operation. There is no evidence to prove that this has an effect on the recovery.
- A lot of patients claim to go through a 'dip' about 3-5 days after the operation. This worsening before feeling better has never been proven, but be aware of this should you or your child also experience it.
- If you need the tonsil tissue handed over to you for religious reasons, please alert your doctor in advance. The tonsils get sent off to be incinerated immediately after the operation.
- There are many ways to take out tonsils. My method of choice is bipolar dissection, which means that I use electrical current to 'burn' the tonsil as I shell it out. You are welcome to discuss different methods with me at the time of booking the surgery.
- You do not require a routine post-operative appointment after a tonsillectomy and/or adenoidectomy.