Caring for Your Child

Discharge Instructions: Tonsillectomy and Adenoidectomy

What to Expect After the Operation:

Pain/Discomfort:
- Many children have pain for up to 10 to 14 days after surgery.
- Ear, jaw and neck pain can occur and may get more severe after 3 to 7 days.
- Signs of pain include: crying, touching the head, throat, ears, neck, drooling, refusing to drink.
- An ice collar may make your child more comfortable.
- It is normal for the uvula in the back of the throat to swell or be very large.
- Give the prescribed pain medication Oxycodone and acetaminophen as ordered by your surgeon every 4 hours.
- Do NOT give Aspirin products or Ibuprofen (Motrin) products for 2 weeks.
- Give pain medication with milk or food to prevent stomach upset.
- Encourage frequent chewing to decrease throat, jaw and ear pain.

Bleeding:
- When the tonsil or adenoid scabs fall off, your child may have bleeding from the mouth or nose.
- If you see blood, call ENT immediately.

Diet/Poor Appetite/Weight Loss:
- Encourage your child to drink often, starting the day of surgery. Jell-O, pudding, ice cream and popsicles count as drinks.
- Your Tonsillectomy and Adenoidectomy Diary tells you how many ounces your child should drink every day.
- Many children do not want to eat their normal diet for 2 weeks. Appetite will be decreased. Encourage food and drinks of any kind frequently.
- If your child does not want to drink, offer small amounts of fluid often.
- Offer Carnation Instant Breakfast or Pediasure if you are concerned with your child’s nutrition or weight loss.
- There are no food restrictions.

Constipation:
- Your child may not have a bowel movement for several days after surgery.
- Encourage frequent fluids, especially drinks high in fiber. Examples are pear or apricot juice.
- Encourage high-fiber foods. Examples are fresh fruit, vegetables, raisins, prunes, and oatmeal.
Activity Level:
- Closely supervise your child for 24 hours and while he is taking the prescribed pain medication Oxycodone. Patients over 16 years may not drive while taking Oxycodone.
- Many children do not return to their normal activity level for 7 to 14 days after surgery.
- Plan to stay within the tristate area for 14 days after surgery. Discuss travel plans with your surgeon.
- Ok to shower or bathe.

Return to School or Daycare and all Gym/Play Activities when:
- Your child feels ready
- Your child is eating and drinking well
- The prescribed pain medication has been stopped, and pain is controlled with acetaminophen only.

Nasal Congestion and Cough:
- Encourage a lot of drinking, including water, juice or milk.
- Use normal saline nasal spray in the nose every 2 to 3 hours as needed while awake.
- A cool mist humidifier can be used while sleeping.
- Keep head propped up on 2 pillows.

Bad Breath:
- Your child will have bad breath until the tonsil and adenoids scabs fall off, in 10 to 14 days.
- Encourage your child to brush his teeth and tongue at least 2 times a day.
- Use normal saline spray in the nose every 2 to 3 hours while awake.

Voice Changes:
- Your child’s voice may change after surgery. It may have a “nasal” sound. The voice usually returns to normal within 12 weeks after surgery.
- Liquid may come from your child’s nose after he drinks. Encourage small sips or drinking through a straw. This problem usually goes away within 12 weeks after surgery.

When to Call for Help:

Call 911 if your child has difficulty breathing.

Call ENT if your child:
- Has bleeding from the nose or mouth or has bright red blood in vomit - Call ENT immediately.
- Does not feel any better 45 minutes after pain medication is given
- Drinks very little or refuses to drink
- Urinates less than twice a day
- Has no tears with crying
- Vomits 2 times in one day
- Is constipated
• Has a temperature of 102°F or higher by mouth or rectum
• Has severe bad breath
• Has severe neck pain or a stiff neck or the head is tilted to the side

You may call ENT if you have any questions or concerns about your child after surgery.

**Phone Number for Questions and Emergencies:**
• 215-590-3440

**ENT Follow Up:**
• The ENT department will contact you by letter 4 to 8 weeks after surgery to check on your child’s progress.
• A follow-up appointment is not required unless you or your surgeon request one.

**Suggested Shopping List:**
• Drinks including juices, milk, Pedialyte (for children under 2 years)
• Soft chewing gum or chewy candy, crunchy food including pretzels, chips, crackers
• Ice cream, yogurt, pudding, popsicles, Jell-O
• Acetaminophen liquid or tablets, (suppositories for children under 4 years of age)
• Normal saline nasal spray (any brand)