

Tonsillectomy Postoperative Care

It is important to stay hydrated while recovering from a tonsillectomy. For the first week, your diet should consist of soft and cool foods.

We recommend pushing fluids heavily. The most common reason for visiting the ER postoperatively is dehydration. Propel, Gatorade or Powerade are generally recommended. Milk products can be used sparingly, since too much can make mucus thick. Straws and sippy cups are allowed, so long as not used to drink anything thick that would require a lot of suction to drink. Red liquids are OK.

Narcotic pain medication is made available for the first few to several days. Ibuprofen can be started on the first postoperative day, and is given every six hours, alternating with the narcotic or Tylenol every six hours, so the child is given pain medication every three hours. This is weaned off as tolerated.

Bleeding can occur, usually between the fourth and tenth day when scabs fall off. Bleeding occurs up to 15% of the time and usually stops on its own. This can initially look like a lot of blood, which can be upsetting. Sometimes blood has been trickling down the throat for a while and a large dark blood clot might be vomited. Remain calm. If the child is old enough, rinsing the mouth and gargling with ice water can help to stop the bleeding. If it seems like a lot or not stopping, have the child continue to rinse with ice water while bringing them to Unity Point Finley Emergency Department. If you are far from there, take them to a local hospital emergency department. Often the bleeding has stopped by the time you are there. In some cases, they may be treated with nebulizer (breathing treatment) or Tranexemic Acid. In 1 to 0.6% of cases, we need to return to the operating room to control bleeding.

If you have any questions in the postoperative period, call Dubuque ENT at 563-588-0506 to speak to a provider.