Tonsillectomy

Tonsils are glands at the back of your throat. A tonsillectomy is surgery to remove the tonsils. Many times the adenoid glands are also removed from the back of the throat at the same time, called an adenoidectomy. This surgery is often done in adults who have obstructive sleep apnea or frequent sore throats.

What should I expect?

You will have surgery then go to the recovery room. Your doctor will determine if you will be going home the day of surgery or if you will remain in the hospital. Most often, patients go home after surgery.
What should I expect when I go home?

When you go home you will be given specific written instructions, but the general instructions are below.

Discomfort

- You may have a sore and dry throat that may last 1 to 2 weeks.
- You may have some ear pain for up to 10 days after surgery.
- Take acetaminophen (Tylenol) for pain according to the package directions or the pain medicine that your doctor prescribes. Avoid aspirin and any products that may have aspirin in them, ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin), and naproxen (Aleve) since these may increase bleeding.
- Use ice packs for comfort and to reduce swelling. Put ice in a plastic bag with a tie or zipper closure or use a bag of frozen vegetables and wrap a towel or cloth around the bag. Do not put ice packs directly on your skin. Apply to your neck or under your jaw for 20 minutes then remove for 20 minutes.

Diet

- Drink plenty of liquids and eat soft foods after surgery. Drink at least 8 to 10 glasses of fluids each day to ease throat soreness and help healing.
  - Start with clear liquids like water, gelatin, apple juice, broth, tea, and popsicles to be sure you do not have any nausea after the medicines given during surgery. Avoid red gelatin, juices and popsicles for the first week so you do not think you are having more bleeding.
  - Then add foods like pudding, cooked cereal, ice cream, frozen yogurt, sherbet, and cream soups.
  - As you are able to swallow more easily, add soft foods like scrambled eggs, mashed potatoes, applesauce, macaroni and cheese or other bland pasta.
  - You may add other foods to your diet as you are able.
- You may find it best to avoid spicy food, acidic foods like citrus fruit or tomato sauces, and rough foods like cereal or chips for the first 2 weeks after surgery while your throat is healing.
- Chew to help avoid ear pain from your jaw muscle being inactive during surgery.
Activity
- Do not lift over 5 pounds for 1 week after surgery to prevent bleeding.
- You should not drive if you are on prescribed pain medicine.
- You may shower and bathe as desired.
- Talk to your doctor about how long you may need to be off work or out of school after your surgery.

Wound care
- A little blood tinged spit for 24 hours after surgery is normal. If this continues after 24 hours, please call your doctor.
- Some bad breath and thick mucous from the throat or mouth is normal.
- Avoid clearing throat.
- You may gargle with iced salt water.
- You may have white patches in the throat which is a sign of healing.

Follow up care
You will have an appointment scheduled 1 to 2 weeks after surgery to check your throat healing.

When should I call my doctor?
- If bleeding is severe or lasts more than 15 minutes.
- If you have a temperature over 101 degrees F.
- If you have questions.

My doctor is ____________________________ and his phone number is ____________________________.

Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.