Adult Tonsillectomy
A Guide to Home Care

What Is a Tonsillectomy?
A tonsillectomy consists of removal of the tonsils. Tonsils are the lymph tissues that lie on each side of the back of the throat.

What to Expect
- Moderate to severe sore throat pain (mostly when you swallow). This may last 1-2 weeks.
- Ear pain. This may last for 7-10 days.
- Blood tinged mucus. This is normal for about a week. Avoid lots of coughing and clearing of the throat.
- A grey-yellow membrane will form where the tonsils were removed. It will slowly go away as you heal. This often takes 2 weeks.
- Your breath may be bad smelling for a few days while your throat is healing. Drinking lots of fluids and good oral care are needed to help decrease this odor.

Pain Relief
- For throat and ear pain, take the pain medicine as directed. Stay on a schedule, even taking pain medication during the night.
- You may also want to use an ice pack or ice collar. Many patients feel this helps ease the pain.
- If you take pain medicine ½ hour before meals, it will help to decrease

Diet
Follow the "tonsillectomy diet" for 1-2 weeks. This means
- Begin with clear liquids (water, broth, apple juice, popsicles). Cold or lukewarm liquids are easier to drink at first.
- Advance to full liquids (milk, cream soups, ice cream, cooked cereals) as soon as you feel ready.
- Add soft, bland foods when you feel you can swallow them (scrambled eggs, macaroni and cheese, mashed potatoes)

Avoid these foods until you feel healed.
- Acidic foods (orange or grapefruit juice, tomatoes)
- Spicy foods
- Rough foods (popcorn, peanuts, potato chips, cold cereals)

Drink plenty of fluids to avoid getting dehydrated. This will also help you to heal. Begin eating more full liquids as soon as you are able. Your throat will still be sore but eating more solid foods and taking in liquids helps to coat your stomach and can help decrease nausea.
Activity
Limit your activity for one (1) week.
- Avoid physical exercise and activity, swimming or lifting greater than 25 pounds.
- Be sure to get plenty of rest.
- Plan to be out of school or off work for about 1-2 weeks.

Follow-Up
You may be scheduled for a follow-up clinic visit about 1 month after surgery. Or, your doctor may not schedule you for a follow-up visit if you feel comfortable with the healing process and have no other concerns.

When to Call the Doctor or Clinic Nurse:
Call one of the phone numbers below if you have:
- Blood tinged mucus can be expected, you should call with larger amounts of active bleeding or blood clots.
- Nausea and vomiting that doesn’t get better
- A fever over 101° F (taken by mouth)
- Pain not controlled with medicine
- A feeling that you are not healing as you should. It takes about 7-10 days before you will start to feel better.

Phone Numbers
ENT Clinic (608) 263-6190, weekdays from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm.

After clinic hours and weekends, the clinic number is answered by the paging operator. Ask for the ENT resident on call. Be sure to leave your name, area code and phone number. The doctor will call you back shortly.

If you live out of the area, please call 1-800-323-8942