



## Tonsillectomy & Adenoidectomy: Post-Operative Instructions

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### General advice

- Do not plan any trips where you are more than 60mins from emergency medical help for at least two weeks after tonsillectomy - major bleeding is uncommon but can occur without any warning during these two weeks
- Take pain relief regularly, even if you are not too sore. It is best to 'stay ahead' of the pain rather than wait until it is very bad. Most patients are prescribed several different pain medications that work well in combination with each other.
- Eat and drink normally - there are no food types you need to avoid. We now know that two weeks of soft food is unnecessary and the sooner you return to a normal diet the better.
- Take frequent small sips of water throughout the day to minimise the chances of dehydration, which worsens the pain
- Avoid exercise and heavy lifting for 3 weeks after the surgery
- You can brush your teeth normally

### Bleeding after a tonsillectomy

You should either call an ambulance (dial 111) or go promptly to the nearest emergency department if you:

- Spit out more than one tablespoon of blood for adults
- Spit out more than one teaspoon of blood for children
- Child vomits blood (children may swallow blood, which then makes them vomit it up)

Approximately 1 in 30 patients will have bleeding after a tonsillectomy. This can occur any time up to three weeks after the surgery, but most often occurs around days 5 to 8. Most bleeding settles on its own, but a small number of bleeds become very serious and potentially life-threatening. For this reason, bleeding after a tonsillectomy should never be taken lightly.

*Contd. overleaf*



## What to expect after tonsillectomy

The following symptoms are all normal after a tonsillectomy and will resolve without any specific treatment:

- It will take at least 2 weeks to recover from your operation
- The back of your throat will look white and 'mucky' - this is not an infection and does not need any antibiotics
- Your ears may hurt - this occurs because the pain signals from the throat and ears are carried by the same nerve to the brain. Take pain relief as needed.
- You will gradually feel better over about 5 days. Between days 5 and 7, patients often feel worse for 24-48hrs, before continuing on with a steady recovery.
- Ongoing snoring and/or apnoeas (breath holding episodes) may occur for a few weeks after the operation until all the swelling has settled
- There may be some small streaks of blood in your saliva
- Your breath will smell for about two weeks
- Uvula swelling - the uvula is the 'dangly thing' at the back of your mouth and it is often swollen after a tonsillectomy. The swelling should settle on its own.