



Patient & Family Guide

2023

# After Your Child's Tonsillectomy or Adenoidectomy Surgery

Valley Regional Hospital



[www.nshealth.ca](http://www.nshealth.ca)

# After Your Child's Tonsillectomy or Adenoidectomy Surgery

## What will happen after surgery?

- Your child will be cared for by a nurse before and after surgery. The nurse will help you with any questions you may have.
- The surgery will take about 20 to 40 minutes.
- The surgeon will talk with you after surgery. They will give you instructions and tell you what to expect when you go home.
- Your child will be taken to the Maternal/Child Unit to recover. Parents and guardians are not always allowed in the Recovery Room.

## Can my child go home after surgery?

- Most children can go home on the day of their surgery. Some children may need to stay in the hospital overnight so staff can check how they are doing.
- Your child may be prescribed medication for pain. The nurse will give you any prescriptions before you leave the hospital.

## How will my child feel after surgery?

- Your child's throat may be very sore.
- They may tell you that they have pain. They may also show you they have pain by:
  - › Spitting
  - › Drooling
  - › Not wanting to drink or swallow
- The pain may last for up to **14 days (2 weeks)**.
- It is important to keep your child comfortable so they can rest and heal. You can help by giving them pain medication.

## Pain medication

- Use acetaminophen (Tylenol®) for pain.
- Liquid Tylenol® is easiest to swallow. Use a syringe (dropper) if your child will not drink the medication from a cup.
- It may be easier for your child to drink fluids about 30 minutes after taking pain medication.
- **Do not give your child ASA (Aspirin®), ibuprofen (Advil®), or naproxen (Aleve®).** The chances of bleeding after surgery is higher when using these medications.
- Make sure you are giving your child the right dose (amount) of pain medication.

## What else can I do to help with the pain?

- Your child's pain may be worse when they are lying down. When they lie down, give them an extra pillow to lift their head.
- Sitting up will help your child to breathe easier and lower swelling.
- Keeping your child's throat moist (wet) will help lower their pain. Have fluids nearby at all times so they will drink often.
- A humidifier in your child's room may also help to keep their throat moist.
- Earaches are common as the body heals after surgery. An earache may last up to **10 days**.
- Placing an ice pack on your child's throat can also help to lower their pain. To make an ice pack, place ice cubes and water in a large resealable bag (like a Ziploc®). Seal the bag and wrap it in a towel.
  - › Gently put the ice pack on the front of your child's neck. You can leave the ice pack on as long as your child feels comfortable.
  - › **Do not** make your child use an ice pack if they do not want to. It is their choice.

## What can my child eat after surgery?

- It is important for your child to get enough fluids to keep their throat moist. This will help to lower their pain and make it easier to swallow.
- Your child may only want fluids, not solid food, for the first few days after surgery. Try giving them water, juice, popsicles, and Jell-O®.
- Watch your child when they are eating popsicles to make sure they do not hurt the back of their throat.
- You may also offer ice cream, milkshakes, yogurt, and pudding.
- As your child starts to feel better, you can add other soft foods like pasta, soup, oatmeal, and applesauce.
- **Do not** give your child foods with sharp edges (like crackers or chips) for about **10 days** after surgery. If your child has a favourite food that they can chew well and swallow easily, it should be OK for them to eat it.

**If your child does not drink any fluids or pee for 24 hours (1 day), they may be dehydrated (not have enough fluids). Go to the nearest Emergency Department right away. They may need intravenous (IV) fluids.**

## What activities can my child do after surgery?

- For **14 days** after surgery, your child should not:
  - › Jump
  - › Run
  - › Swim
  - › Bike
  - › Play in a gym
  - › Play organized sports
- For **10 days** after their surgery, your child should try to avoid:
  - › Coughing
  - › Clearing their throat
  - › Blowing their nose hard

This can hurt their throat as it heals. They can spit gently into a tissue, if needed.

- Your child should rest for **7 to 10 days**.
- They will be able to go back to daycare or school in **1 to 2 weeks (7 to 14 days)**. Please talk about this with your child's surgeon.
- Your child should not be with anyone who has a cold or a fever (temperature above 38 °C or 100.4 °F).

## What else can I expect?

- Your child may have nausea (feel sick to their stomach) and vomiting (throwing up) for the first 1 to 2 days after surgery. This is common.
  - **If these symptoms get severe (very bad), or last for more than 48 hours (2 days), call your child's surgeon or go to the nearest Emergency Department.**
- Your child may vomit after surgery. There may be old, dark brown blood in the vomit. This is common.
  - If your child clears their throat and spits out mucus, it may be pink or brown. This is common.
  - Your child may have trouble swallowing for up to 6 weeks.
  - Your child's tonsil area will look grey or white. This is common.
  - It is common for your child to have bad breath after surgery. This will get better as their throat heals.
  - Your child may brush their teeth with an adult watching them closely. Ask them to take their time and to be gentle while they brush.

- This surgery may affect your child's palate (the muscle that stops food and drinks from going into your nose when you swallow). If your child had an **adenoidectomy**, they may get fluid in their nose when they swallow. This may last for about 3 to 5 months.

**Your child may have a small amount of bright red blood on their pillow or in a tissue for up to 14 days after their surgery.**

**It is NOT common for them to have bright red blood in their:**

- › Throat
- › Mouth
- › Nose
- › Saliva (spit)
- › Vomit

**This can be a sign of bleeding. Go to the nearest Emergency Department right away and call your child's surgeon.**

## **Follow-up appointment**

- Before you leave the hospital, we will give you a follow-up appointment with your child's surgeon. This appointment is usually 4 weeks (1 month) after your child's surgery.
- If you have questions about the surgery, please call the surgeon's office:
  - › Phone: 902-678-4233



**Call your child's surgeon or go to the nearest Emergency Department right away if your child:**

- › has severe pain that is not helped by pain medication.
- › has bright red bleeding.
- › has a fever above 38.5 °C or 101 °F for **more than 24 hours.**
- › does not drink any fluids or pee for **more than 24 hours.**
- › has severe stomach pain or vomiting for **more than 48 hours.**

**Your child will heal best in a smoke-free environment. Do not smoke at home or in your car. Ask others not to smoke around your child. Breathing in smoke can slow your child's healing.**

## Checklist for parents and caregivers

- Do you have questions or concerns about your child's health or surgery?
- Do you have questions about how to care for your child at home?
- Do you have questions about your child's pain medication?
- Do you know how much medication to give, and when?

### **Patient and Family Feedback**

Safe care and quality service is our goal.

We value your feedback.

If you have any compliments or concerns, call our Patient Satisfaction Line:

› Phone: 902-679-2494

› Phone (toll-free): 1-800-866-9757

# Notes:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here:  
<https://library.nshealth.ca/Patients-Guides>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:  
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

*Prepared by:* ENT surgeons, Valley Regional Hospital  
*Designed by:* Nova Scotia Health Library Services

WV85-2033 © October 2023 Nova Scotia Health Authority  
The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.