
What happens after removal of tonsils

What is tonsillectomy?

Tonsillectomy is an operation where the tonsils are removed through the mouth while a person is asleep.

What can I expect after I have tonsils removed?

The most common symptom after removal of tonsils is pain. Typically, the pain lasts for 10 days with the pain gradually increasing in intensity for the first 5 days and then gradually improving. Generally patient return to normal at the 2 week after surgery or even earlier.

What can I do to minimize the pain?

The most important thing to do after tonsillectomy is to eat and drink as normally as you can. Eating and drinking allows maintains hydration, cleans the tonsil wound and thus prevent the build up of scabs in the tonsil wound. Not eating and drinking leads to dehydration. It's also important to eat high-fibre foods to prevent constipation that can occur as a side effect of the pain-killers

What type of food can I eat after tonsillectomy?

Generally any type of food is fine. Acidic, citric and spicy foods along with very hard foods such as toast can be sometimes difficult. Typically most people eat soft foods. If eating food is really difficult, it is critical to continue to drink lots of water, juice and soups to prevent dehydration. Dehydration leads to a vicious cycle where more pain prevents further eating and drinking, leading to further dehydration and continuing the cycle. Icy poles are excellent for both relief of pain and of providing hydrations. Try to time eating with just after a dose of pain relief will make eating and drinking easier.

What medications can I take to treat the pain?

Regular pain-killers are required. Everyone should have regular Panadol taken strictly irrespective whether there is pain or not. Regular Panadol provides a good baseline of pain relief and by taking it regularly; it can prevent the pain from taking hold. If there is still pain after taking Panadol then another type of pain-killers is usually required. In children this is typically Nurofen, in adults Celebrex and Endone is typically used. There is a theoretical risk of increased bleeding that can occur with non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (such as nurofen, ibuprofen and Celebrex) but this has not been shown in large studies. Nevertheless, these should be used sparingly. Opioid based pain-killers (such as Panadeine and Endone) can cause nausea and constipation. If needed, laxative such as lactulose can be used.

What happens if there is bleeding?

While bleeding after tonsillectomy is rare, it does occur. If the amount is very small for example: mixed in the saliva or a small clot, sucking on some ice usually stops it. If bleeding is more substantial, recurs or you are concerned please present to your nearest emergency department and contact your surgeon. Generally this is treated with overnight observation and some mouth gargles, but occasionally a trip back to the operating theatre may be required.