

# Caring for your child after tonsil surgery

After your child has had surgery to remove their tonsils, they are likely to have some pain and experience other normal side effects over the next two weeks. This information will help you understand how to care for your child at home, help them to recover, and when to seek medical advice if you are worried.

## RECOVERY TIME

Your child should stay at home for **two weeks** after surgery and avoid sport or vigorous activity.

Your child may not feel like doing very much for up to **10 days**.

Check on your child at least twice during the first two nights to see if there is any bleeding or difficulty with breathing.

If your child is under four years old, it may be best for them to sleep in the same room as you for the first couple of nights (or you with them).

### Do not let your child:

- go swimming until they are completely healed. This can take up to four weeks depending on recovery
- be near people with coughs and colds
- If your child has had their adenoids removed then no sniffing or blowing their nose for two weeks. It may be a month before your child can breathe properly through their nose.

## SOME SIDE EFFECTS ARE NORMAL

It is normal for your child to have:

- a painful sore throat
- pain in the ears – known as referred pain
- bad breath
- a runny nose
- voice change
- white patches in the throat and a coating on the tongue.

These can last for up to **two weeks** after the tonsils are removed. They **are not** signs of infection.

### Watch our videos

You can hear from other parents about their experiences caring for their child after tonsil surgery at home. Visit: [www.bettersafecare.vic.gov.au/resources/tools/making-a-decision-about-tonsillectomy](http://www.bettersafecare.vic.gov.au/resources/tools/making-a-decision-about-tonsillectomy)

## Pain

Having tonsils taken out can be very painful.

Your child's pain **may get worse** before it gets better, particularly on **days four to ten** after surgery.

For information on how to help your child's pain, see your child's pain management plan after tonsil surgery.

## Eating and drinking

Eating and drinking is very important, as it will help clean and heal the throat.

In the first few days after surgery, give your child plenty of fluids, including sugary drinks like cordial or lemonade. This is particularly important if they are not eating much.

Give your child medication to help the pain at least 30 to 60 minutes before eating to allow it time to work. This will help to ease the pain when swallowing.

There are no restrictions on what your child can eat. Most children prefer soft food after surgery. Cool drinks, icy poles and ice cream may be soothing.

Your child should continue to brush their teeth morning and night.

## Nausea and vomiting

If your child vomits, stop giving food for an hour then try to give small amounts of fluid often. When they can take fluids without vomiting, give them small amounts of food. Some children do not tolerate pain medication on an empty stomach so it may be helpful to give a small amount of soft food with the pain medication.

## WHEN TO SEE A DOCTOR OR GET EMERGENCY CARE

**Seek emergency care** if your child has active bleeding from the nose or mouth, or in their vomit, or is swallowing a lot (which happens when there is blood in the throat). You should attend the emergency department at Ballarat Health Services or the closest emergency department for assessment and treatment if required.

### Seek prompt medical advice if you are worried your child:

- has vomited more than four times in the first 24 hours after the surgery
- has severe pain and distress that is not settling
- is drinking only very small amounts or is unable to drink at all for several days
- has a temperature of 38°C or higher.

## Follow up

Your surgeon will instruct nursing staff on your child's **follow up appointment** and make the arrangements.

You are generally advised of the details on discharge from hospital.

## Comforting your child

Help your child to understand what to expect by using simple age appropriate language. It is important to be honest with them about the surgery and recovery.

In addition to giving regular pain medication:

- distract them with a favourite quiet time activity – e.g. books, music and movies
- give them cold or icy drinks and food, as this can be soothing for some
- make sure they drink plenty of fluids to keep the throat moist
- maintain good pain management regime to help keep your child as comfortable as possible
- a pain management regime will encourage eating and drinking which promotes healing