Following up with families after a tonsillectomy

Once a child is discharged home from hospital after a tonsillectomy (with or without adenoidectomy), an experienced staff member should call the child’s family on day four after surgery. This is a chance to check on the child’s progress at home, discuss any parental concerns, and decrease the likelihood of the child being readmitted.

Key aims for the phone call

Discuss the child’s overall progress and reassure the parent of expected progress.

Remind the parent that their child is likely to feel worse before feeling better, usually on **day four or five after surgery.**

Troubleshoot any issues such as pain management, hydration and medical follow up.

### Questions to ask

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| How do you feel your child’s recovery is going? | Your child will need two weeks off from childcare or school. They may not feel like doing very much for up to 10 days.  To help their recovery, don’t let them:   * participate in any sport or vigorous physical activity for two weeks * go swimming until they are completely healed (several weeks) * go near people with coughs and colds * sniff or blow their nose for two weeks (only if they have had their adenoids removed). |
| Is there anything that is worrying you about your child’s recovery? | It is normal for your child to have:   * a sore throat * pain in the ears * bad breath * a runny nose * voice change * white patches in the throat.   **Seek emergency care** if your child hasfresh bleeding from the nose or mouth, in their vomit, or is swallowing a lot (which happens when there is blood in the throat).  **Seek prompt medical advice if you are worried your child:**   * has vomited more than four times within 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 * has a temperature of 38°C or more. |
| How has your child been overnight? | Snoring is fairly normal as your child recovers. It is more serious if they are having trouble breathing.  If you are worried, we suggest:   * sleeping in same room as your child * getting up to regularly check on your child. |
| How is your child’s pain? Are they comfortable? | Many children will have more pain on **day four or five** after a tonsillectomy. This is normal.  If the child is not comfortable, ask:   * What medication are you giving your child and how often? (Emphasise the importance of giving paracetamol regularly.) Are you alternating different medications? * When are you giving your child the medications? (Suggest waking them early in the morning, at least 30 to 60 minutes before food and at night time.) |
| Are you having any trouble getting your child to take the medication? | Provide age appropriate tips to help the child to take his/her medication.   * Give your child a drink immediately after giving medication. * Add the medication to a small amount of drink or food to improve the taste * Try different dispensers – e.g. an oral syringe, dosage spoon or small medicine cup. |
| Is your child eating and drinking as much as they usually would? | It is important to give regular medication to help the pain, e.g.at least 30 to 60 minutes before food.  If they are not yet eating much, give them sugary drinks like cordial for energy.  Try soothing cool drinks, icy poles and ice cream. |
| Do you have any other concerns about your child’s recovery from their surgery? | Remind the parent of any medical follow up required, and when to see a doctor or get emergency care if they are worried (see question two above for suggested advice). |