

## Care Following Palate Surgery

**DIET:** Diet following surgery is very important. Despite pain, eating and chewing are essential to restore the muscle activity of the throat. For the first 1 or 2 days after surgery, adequate fluid intake must be maintained to avoid dehydration. Water, ice chips, broths, soft drinks, and spicy foods (Mexican or Italian) are not well tolerated. After several days the diet can be advanced to soft foods, which must be chewed well before swallowing. These foods include ground meat, scrambled eggs, chicken (broiled or baked), rice, potatoes, bread, cereal, and cooked vegetables. Chewing gum is allowed. If throat pain is too severe to eat, take a dose of pain medicine and numbing jelly about 30 minutes before meals.

**ACTIVITY:** Strict bed rest is not necessary and not recommended. Following palate surgery, you will not feel 100% for about a week. Over-exertion is to be avoided. Adults should lift nothing heavier than a grocery bag, and stooping or bending should be avoided. No exercise or athletic activity is permitted during healing. Get plenty of sleep. Avoid exposure to heat.

It is not unusual to have ups and downs the first week; there will be good days and bad days the first week. This will level off after the first week and a half.

**PAIN:** Pain is usually the major hurdle to overcome. Pain may increase 2 to 5 days following surgery, even extending to the ears. This is considered normal. Alternate plain Tylenol with the prescription medicine. If too much narcotic is taken, nausea, vomiting, and constipation may result. **AVOID THE FOLLOWING:** Aspirin or aspirin products (Excedrin®), anti-inflammatory medicine (Motrin®, Ibuprofen®, Advil®), **FOR TWO WEEKS SURGERY.** These medications can inhibit proper clotting and lead to bleeding. Narcotics can best be used for residual pain in the mornings and the evenings.

**BLEEDING:** Bleeding after palate surgery is not common but may occur up to 10 days following surgery. This usually happens when the membrane separates from the throat, and may result from chewing improperly, excessive exertion, high blood pressure, or poor clotting. It is for those reasons that the above precautions should be observed.

A small amount of blood streaking in the spurn is normal until fully healed. But bleeding in terms of 1/2 ounce or more should be treated as follows: Rinse the back of the mouth with sips of hydrogen peroxide mixed with cool water in the back of the throat for a few seconds, spit it out, and repeat if necessary. Persistent bleeding should be reported to me immediately or report to the hospital emergency room. You should not leave the Lufkin area for at least three weeks following surgery, or unless medical clearance has been given due to the chance of bleeding.

**VOICE:** The voice will sound nasal for the first 7 days or so. This is considered normal for this time span. If this persists beyond this point, let me know.

**SWELLING:** There may be post-operative swelling of the palate which makes talking and eating difficult. Discoloration of the throat represents the membrane which should not be disturbed. Bad breath may be present for one to two weeks and is usual. Small dissolving white sutures may be visible on the throat: do not bother these.

Care of the throat involves frequent gargles with saline (4 to 6 times daily) and after meals. "Phyarinal" and "Gargle-Aid" may be recommended as added treatments to the gargles.

Medication: You will receive the following medications:

1. ANTIBIOTIC to protect infection.
2. PAIN KILLER which is usually a mild narcotic.
3. NUMBING JELLY (xylocaine), which is optional.
4. STEROID This pill reduces throat inflammation and spasm (therefore pain).

**RETURN APPOINTMENT:** The follow-up appointments are included in the surgical fee. I am very concerned about your healing, and will check you as frequently as needed.

Your return appointment is scheduled for: \_\_\_\_\_.