

**Dr Jason Chau MD, MPH, FRCSC**  
**Canadian Sleep Surgery Clinic**

Sleep Disordered Breathing Surgery  
Facial Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery  
General Otolaryngology - Head & Neck Surgery

#103, 49 Richard Way SW  
Calgary, AB, T3E 7M8  
T: 403 217 8668 F: 403 217 8658

**Post Operative Instructions for Tonsillectomy**

Dr. Chau would like to see you in follow up 4-6 weeks after surgery, we have booked your post operative follow up appointment on:

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***(This will take place at our Lincoln Park location: #103 - 49 Richard Way SW, Calgary, AB)***

***Pain Control***

You will be given narcotic pain medication after surgery while in hospital. You will be prescribed pain medication as well to be taken at home after discharge. Take this medication as you need for pain management, and try not to let the pain increase to an intolerable point before taking the medication. If you use all the medication, please contact our office prior to running out to obtain another prescription. Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) is preferred for pain control as narcotics should be used cautiously outside of the hospital setting. Your pain will be significant for at least the first 2-3 days post surgery, but this should improve considerably by 10 days following surgery.

***Avoid aspirin, NSAIDs (such as ibuprofen, Advil®, Motrin®, naproxen, or Aleve®), vitamin supplements, or herbal medications for at least two weeks because they can increase your risk of bleeding after surgery.***

***Diet***

You may experience some discomfort or irritation in your throat not only from the procedure being performed but also because of the endotracheal tube that was used for your general anesthetic. Once you are released from the hospital, try to increase your intake of fluids so you will avoid dehydration. You can monitor this by noting the frequency that you are voiding(urinating). In addition to water, it is helpful to drink liquids, such as; juices or Gatorade® and, especially, milk shakes or Ensure®. These type of liquids will provide energy and protein during your recovery period. You should be able to transition to soft solid foods such as eggs or yogurt and be able to tolerate a largely normal diet. You can advance your diet according to your own schedule, being careful not to cause too much pain. **Try to avoid foods with sharp edges, such as chips, as these can cause bleeding.**

***Antibiotics***

You will be prescribed an antibiotic to take for several days. This is used to prevent infection and decrease swelling. Take the antibiotic as directed. If you develop a rash or diarrhea (possible risk of antibiotics and other medications), stop the antibiotic and contact our office immediately.

Dr. Chau may prescribe you tantum mouthwash after surgery and it can turn your mouth a light greenish colour. You also may notice the incisions to appear white after a couple days post operatively, this is your tissue healing and is normal. If you develop a fever, severe headache, bleeding or consistent foul taste, contact the office as soon as possible or proceed to your nearest emergency room as these are signs of infection.

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***Physical Activity***

It is important to walk at least three times a day starting the day after surgery. Walking and spending time out of bed (walking or in a chair) rather than in bed are helpful because they reduce the risks of developing pneumonia or blood clots in the legs. However, it is also very important you **avoid strenuous activity for two weeks following surgery** as it typically raises your heart rate and blood pressure which can increase swelling or cause bleeding.

***Jaw discomfort or ear problems***

It is common to have jaw pain or ear symptoms such as pain, pressure, or fullness. This should improve within 1-2 weeks following surgery. Swelling in the throat can interfere with your ability to clear or pop your ears and it can also be sensed by your body as pain coming from your ears even though the ears are not affected (called referred pain).

***Sleep with head elevated (at 45 degrees) for at least three days***

Elevating your head during sleep decreases blood flow to the head and neck regions. Therefore, it decreases swelling and the associated pain. Elevating the head during sleep may also improve breathing. We recommend elevating your head during sleep at 45 degrees for at least three days following the procedure. Another thing that may reduce swelling is to use ice or something frozen (peas in a bag).

***Nausea and constipation***

Nausea and constipation are very common after any surgery. The anesthetic medications used during surgery and the pain medication you receive after surgery can cause these. You may try taking laxative and if you still have not had a bowel movement within 3 days after taking laxatives, notify our office.

**Proceed to your nearest emergency room as soon as possible or call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care.** For example, call if:

- You passed out (lost consciousness).
- You have severe trouble breathing.
- You develop a teaspoon or more of bleeding that lasts for longer than 15 minutes.
- You have sudden chest pain and shortness of breath, or you cough up blood.

**If you have non life threatening questions and are unable to reach me directly by phone, please email the office at [sleepsurgerycanada@icloud.com](mailto:sleepsurgerycanada@icloud.com). You can visit the Alberta Health Link website at <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Health/aftercareinformation/Pages/default.aspx> or call Alberta Health Link and speak with a nurse 24/7 by dialling 811 if:**

- You vomit blood or if you cannot keep fluids down. You may have signs of needing more fluids such as sunken eyes and a dry mouth, and you pass only a little dark urine.
- You have pain that does not get better after you take pain medicine.
- If you develop a fever, severe headache, bleeding or consistent foul taste.

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## **Risks**

- 1. Bleeding** - There is a small risk of bleeding. A major factor in preventing serious bleeding is to avoid the use of aspirin, NSAIDs (such as ibuprofen, Advil®, Motrin®, naproxen, or Aleve®), vitamin supplements, or herbal medications **for at least two weeks before and after surgery**. If you have more than a teaspoon of bleeding, you should notify our office immediately. Another procedure may be necessary to control the bleeding. If the bleeding is significant, immediately seek care in the closest emergency department or call 911.
- 2. Infection** - Infection is rare because you should be taking antibiotics but not impossible after surgery. The antibiotics given to you at the time of surgery will reduce the chance of infection and decrease swelling. The back of the throat where the tonsils were removed will often look white and irritated; this is a normal part of the healing process and does not necessarily indicate an infection. Prescription mouthwash may be used as instructed by Dr. Chau. Patients should not use over the counter mouthwashes following surgery because many of these contain alcohol that can irritate the lining of the mouth and interfere with healing.
- 3. Tooth injury** - Operating in the back of the throat is impossible unless an instrument is placed to keep the mouth open. This is the same instrument used when tonsillectomies are done. Rarely, a tooth may be injured by this instrument, and the risk is much higher if a tooth is loose or decayed prior to surgery.
- 4. Change in voice**- After removal of the tonsils and/or adenoids, you may experience a change in voice with a more nasal tone during the healing process. Voice changes are usually temporary and resolve without further treatment; in very rare cases, they may persist for longer than six months and require treatment.
- 5. Continued snoring** - The procedure may reduce snoring and eliminate obstructive sleep apnea (if present). Usually snoring will improve dramatically, however, many patients will continue to snore to some extent, even after a successful surgery. Additional procedure may be discussed if further improvement is desired.