



Family Education Sheet



Home Care Instructions for Patients after a Pharyngeal Flap

This sheet gives you information on caring for your child after a pharyngeal flap.

General Guidelines for Nutrition

- Your child may not use a straw for 6 weeks.
- Give your child liquids every 1 to 2 hours to keep the mouth and palate moist. The more your child drinks, the better he or she will feel.

Day of Surgery to Day 1 after Surgery

- Give your child clear liquids or ice chips for the first 2 days after the operation. Examples of clear liquids are: water, apple juice, grape juice, Jell-O[®], Italian ice, popsicles (off the stick), cranberry juice, clear broth, bouillon, gingerale, cola, lemonade and tea without cream or milk.
- Avoid drinks that are too hot or too cold. Give drinks only little bit warmer or a little bit colder than room temperature. Very hot or cold drinks may cause discomfort. Do not use ice cubes.

Days 2 to 9

- Give your child full liquids or blenderized foods from the 3rd to the 9th day after the operation. If you do not have a blender, mash the food very well by hand. Blenderized or mashed foods must be of a soft enough consistency so that the food can be fed with a spoon. Most foods can be included in this diet as long as they are blenderized or mashed. All meals should be followed with a clear liquid rinse to clean the sutures (stitches) and palate.
- Liquids such as milk, juice and gravy may be used to make foods softer.
- Some examples of full liquids or blenderized or mashed foods are: milkshakes, yogurt, scrambled eggs, pureed fruits, pureed vegetables, strained oatmeal, farina, cream of wheat, mashed potatoes (thinned with milk, gravy, or margarine), pureed or strained soups, melted sherbet and ice cream, thinned pudding, and custard.
- Your child should eat six small meals each day.

Days 10 to 6 weeks

- Give your child soft, cut-up foods from the 10th day to 6 weeks after surgery. Examples of soft foods are cooked cereals, softened ready to eat cereals, french toast, crackers softened with milk or water, bread, dinner rolls, waffles, pancakes, muffins, cookies softened with milk or water, cakes, doughnuts, pies, canned fruits, bananas, tender meats, fish, eggs, cheese, tuna, mashed potatoes, rice, macaroni, spaghetti, soups, jams, jellies, honey, cooked vegetables, and plain yogurt.
- Do not give any hard foods such as: chips, pretzels, bread sticks, hard candy, bagels, nuts, seeds, fresh fruits and dried fruits. They may damage the suture line.

Breathing

- You can expect your child to be breathing deeply and snoring for several weeks after the operation. Changing position may help your child to breathe more comfortably. A cool humidifier or vaporizer in the bedroom may be helpful.
- Call your child's doctor if your child:
 - has periods of not breathing, or
 - has trouble sleeping or is very tired during the day.

Hygiene

- Your child should rinse his or her mouth three times a day for 10 days. The rinse can be plain water, salt water (1/2 teaspoon of salt in a glass of water) or mouthwash diluted with water.
- The sutures will dissolve in about 12 days. They do not need to be removed.
- If your child has nasal congestion that doesn't get better, use saline nose drops or spray. This will help dissolve the thick mucus. You can buy saline nose drops or spray without a prescription. If the nasal congestion does not go away, call your child's doctor.

Activity

- Once at home, your child may walk and play quietly. Your child should avoid yelling or screaming.
- Your child's doctor will tell you when your child can return to school and day care.
- He or she should avoid any rough activity for 4-6 weeks. This includes gym at school and contact sports.
- Your child's doctor will tell you when your child can return to gym and sports.
- Your child should not lift anything heavier than 10 pounds.

Constipation

- Keep track of your child's bowel habits. He or she should return to usual bowel habits. If not, he or she may be constipated.
- Call your child's doctor or nurse if your child seems constipated.

Pain

- Your child may have some mild discomfort at home. Your child may complain of pain in the back of the head, ears, neck, or throat for the first week after the operation. This is normal. A cool cloth or ice pack to the back of the neck may help.
- Pain can cause your child not to drink well.
- If your child is in pain, give acetaminophen (also known as Tylenol® or FEVERALL®). Acetaminophen comes as a tablet, caplet, and liquid. It is used to relieve mild to moderate pain and to reduce fever. It is very important to take acetaminophen exactly as directed by your doctor. Follow the directions on the package and ask your doctor or pharmacist to explain any part you do not understand. Do not take more or less of it than prescribed by your doctor. Do not take it any more often than prescribed by your doctor.
- Your child's doctor or nurse will give you a prescription for a pain medicine. If the pain does not go away with acetaminophen, give the pain medicine as prescribed and instructed by your doctor and nurse.
- To help your child sleep better, try to give a dose of pain medicine around bedtime, especially for the first few days at home.

OBHome Care Instructions for Patients after a Pharyngeal Flap

- Ibuprofen can be used as needed after one week. Ibuprofen comes as a tablet, caplet, and liquid. It is used to relieve mild to moderate pain and to reduce fever. It is very important to take ibuprofen exactly as directed by your doctor. Follow the directions on the package and ask your doctor or pharmacist to explain any part you do not understand. Do not take more or less of it than prescribed by your doctor. Do not take it any more often than prescribed by your doctor.

Emotional Recovery

- After a pharyngeal flap, your child may be tired or irritable. It is important that your child rest.
- Healing for each child is different. In time (usually about one month), your child will return to his or her usual activity level.

Follow-up

- You will need to return for a follow-up visit. Call the doctor's office to arrange this.
- Speech therapy can usually resume 6-8 weeks after the operation. Check with your surgeon at your follow-up visit.

When to Call Your Child's Doctor or Nurse

Call if your child:

- has bleeding from the mouth;
- has trouble sleeping;
- has a fever higher than 100.5° F;
- has drainage from the mouth;
- has pain that doesn't go away after giving pain medicine;
- is not drinking liquids or is vomiting;
- is irritable and cannot be comforted; or

Call with any questions or concerns.

A ***Spanish*** version of this is available from your provider

Send comments or questions to: Familyed@childrens.harvard.edu
