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Uvulopalatopharyngoplasty (UPPP, UP3) Surgery for Snoring and Sleep Apnea

Uvulopalatopharyngoplasty removes excess tissue in the back of the throat to provide a larger airway. Specifically, the uvula (the dangling piece of tissue in the back of the throat) and a part of the soft palate (to which the uvula is attached) are removed to enlarge the breathing area in the back of the throat. Often the tonsils, if still present, are also removed. The primary indications for UPPP are obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) or other forms of sleep disordered breathing. Limited version of UPPP, such as uvulectomy or extended uvulectomy, are performed for loud snoring in the absence of OSA. These procedures are sometimes combined with nasal procedures (e.g. septoplasty).

Prior to surgery, you should avoid aspirin/Advil type medication for at least three weeks. These medications may lead to bleeding. Tylenol is O.K. It is important to inform us of any problems that you (or your family) may have regarding possible bleeding disorders or anesthesia difficulties. Blood tests are required prior to surgery. Generally, nothing may be taken by mouth after midnight before the surgery.

The operation is performed through the mouth, usually under general anesthesia. Occasionally, the uvulectomy may be done under local anesthesia. Patients with sleep apnea are kept in the hospital overnight and released early the next morning. After UPPP, it is important to drink as much fluid as possible, avoiding acidic and alcoholic beverages and hot liquids. You should be on this diet for 10-14 days. Avoid hard foods (pretzels, pizza, crackers, toast, nachos, etc.) which can scratch the throat and lead to bleeding. Chewing gum may help decrease spasm of the jaw muscles.

After surgery, there may be problems with nausea, vomiting, sore throat (with trouble swallowing), fever, and ear pain. Some patients describe pain after UPPP as the worst sore throat they have ever had. However, you will be given adequate pain medication as well as the antibiotic. There is often pain after UPPP for up to two to three weeks after the surgery. The throat may look bad after surgery, with a thick white coating- this appearance is completely normal and not a cause for alarm. You may also notice stitches in the throat- these will dissolve over a couple of weeks. There may be a temporary nasal-sounding voice after surgery, and occasionally with swallowing, some liquid may come through the nose. These are temporary symptoms that resolve within several days to a week after surgery, in most cases. Avoid aspirin for three weeks after surgery. If you notice bleeding that does not stop completely within two minutes, you should call the office at (978) 256-5557. Further instructions will then be provided. You should plan on about one to two weeks of missed school/work. Vigorous exercise should be avoided for three weeks. Work/school excuse notes will be provided if necessary. You should remain in the area for two weeks after surgery. A postoperative visit should be scheduled. If you have any questions, please call our office.