

Uvulopalatopharyngoplasty

Uvulopalatopharyngoplasty (UPPP) is an operation to improve certain sleep disorder symptoms such as obstructive sleep apnea and snoring. It involves recontouring the roof of the mouth in the vicinity of the soft palate. It usually also requires removing the tonsils if they are still present.

Because there may be several causes (such as deviated septum or large tongue) occurring at the same time, this procedure may only give partial relief, depending on the relative importance of palate and uvula size. The success rate in treating apnea cases has been reported to be greater than 50%, and the expectation for snoring improvement may be greater than 70%. The key to success is identifying which patients are good candidates and which ones are not.

The surgery is quite painful. It will hurt to eat and to talk. You will be given pain medications. The biggest concern with the pain medication is the effect it can have on your alertness and drive to breathe. Each year someone with sleep apnea dies after surgery because of a pain medication overdose. As such, we are not overly aggressive with pain medications because of this catastrophic risk. It is also important to have a friend or family member stay with you for the first couple days and nights to make sure you are not too groggy or forgetting to breathe. This is of particular concern in the subsequent hours after you take the first few doses of pain medications.

The most common complications include bleeding after surgery, infection, dehydration, and temporary airway obstruction due to post operative swelling. Occasionally patients with severe obstruction or who have added risk due to obesity may require a temporary tracheostomy and observation in an ICU setting. This is extremely rare, and most patients can safely go home the same day of surgery.

In addition to the above postoperative issues, some patients also have issues when swallowing. They may experience that some food or liquids go up into the nose when swallowing. Patients may also experience a hollow-sounding voice. Both of these problems are generally pretty mild and get better during the first few weeks of healing. Very rarely, patients may develop unanticipated scarring that requires subsequent surgery to correct.

Post-operative Tips

1. Stay hydrated! Put much more emphasis on drinking than eating. Avoid citrus drinks during this time, as their acidic nature will be very uncomfortable. Getting dehydrated significantly intensifies the pain and makes it harder to keep on top of pain control.
2. Avoid eating hard or sharp foods such as chips and firm bread. Good alternatives include applesauce, yogurt, and pastas.
3. You will lose weight during the recovery period. That is okay. Stay hydrated!

4. Low grade fevers are common following throat surgery. If you have a fever greater than 101.5°, you should contact your doctor's office or proceed to an emergency room. If you are unusually confused or overly lethargic it may be a sign of other problems. Contact our office or go to an emergency room.
5. Surgery for snoring and sleep apnea involves recontouring the air passage in the back of your throat. This anatomy is very sensitive and can be quite painful. Additionally, it is not uncommon to also have associated pain in the ears, jaw, or even neck area.
6. Another typical side effect is bad breath. Fortunately, it is not a sign of infection, but just normal healing.
7. Please don't try to brush or gargle in the back of your throat, as it could dislodge a scab and result in bleeding.
8. It is not uncommon to spit up **small** amounts of blood on the day of surgery or even the day after surgery. However, if you develop significant amounts of bleeding you need to contact our office or go to an Emergency Room immediately. Significant bleeding includes: constantly spitting bright red blood, vomiting dark brown or red liquids, or any other bleeding that concerns you.
9. Recovery can take up to three weeks, although usually by day 10-12 most patients have started to turn the corner and are feeling better. There are no absolute restrictions on when to return to work/school; return when you feel up to it.
10. In addition pain medication, other measures can help with pain:
 - a. Drinking cool liquids
 - b. Ice packs to the outside of the neck (can substitute frozen bags of vegetables, berries, etc.)
11. The medicine given to you during surgery can make you feel sleepy, lightheaded, or experience temporary memory loss. These symptoms should slowly wear off during the first 24 hours. Due to these effects, you should **NOT**:
 - a. Stay alone (have someone stay with you at home for the first 24 hours)
 - b. Drive a car, operate machinery or power tools
 - c. Drink any alcoholic beverages
 - d. Make any important decisions or sign legal documents
 - e. Take any tranquilizers, sleeping medications, or a nonprescription medication for 24 hours.