
WHAT IS A TONSILLECTOMY?

A tonsillectomy is an operation to remove the tonsils. Tonsils are lumps of tissue in the throat, one on each side of the tongue. They are part of the immune system that fights germs for young children, but the body can do that without them. Tonsils are removed only if they are doing more harm than good. Sometimes the adenoids may or may not be removed at the same time.

Why remove the tonsils?

Usually the tonsils are removed if they cause frequent sore throats even with treatment of antibiotics. They are also removed if they are blocking the breathing space, which may cause the child to stop breathing for a few seconds during sleep. Some children develop abscesses (pockets of pus) alongside the tonsil, as a result of infection, and a tonsillectomy may stop this from happening again.

If the reason for removing your child's tonsils is related to sleep problems, your doctor may need to send your child for a sleep study before the operation. Based on these results, your doctor will let you know how urgent the operation is and whether or not it is necessary for your child to stay overnight in the hospital for the operation.

What does the operation involve?

Your child will be asleep under general anesthesia. The tonsils are removed through the mouth. The procedure takes about 30 minutes. Your child will then be taken to a recovery area to be watched carefully by specially trained nurses as he or she wakes up.

You will need to make arrangements for your child to stay home from school or child car for one week after the operation. Let us know if your child has a chest infection or sore throat before the surgery date because it may be better to delay the operation for a few weeks. It is very important

to tell us if your child has any unusual bleeding or bruising problems, or if this type of problem might run in the family.

What are the risks of the operation?

The operation is very safe, but every operation has risks:

- The most serious problem is bleeding. If this occurs, a second operation will be needed to stop it. Your surgeon can tell you how often this occurs and their own experience with the complication. If this happens after the operation and you are at home, you should go to the nearest emergency department.
- The doctor may accidentally chip or knock out a tooth, especially if it is loose, capped or crowned. Please let us know if your child has any teeth like this.
- If the child is in too much pain, dehydration may happen if he or she cannot drink or eat enough. This complication does not happen that frequently.

How long will my child be in the hospital?

- Generally, the operation is done as a day procedure, where the patient goes home the same day of the surgery.
- Sometimes the doctor may prefer to keep the patient in hospital until the late evening or even overnight. This depends on the sleep study results and the general health of your child. This is to ensure the safety of the patient and the reason for that will be discussed with you by your doctor.

What happens after the operation?

- Some children feel sick after the operation and may need to be given medicine for this, but usually settle quickly. Your child's throat may be sore for approximately ten days. It is important to take the suggested painkillers regularly, about 30 minutes before meals for at least the first week.
- Aspirin is not safe for children and should never be given to children under 16 years of age, unless prescribed by a doctor. Please let your doctor know if Aspirin is taken for a certain medication condition.
- Your child may eat his/her normal food and drink plenty of fluids – it will help the throat heal and will help the pain too.

- Your child may have sore ears. This is normal – it happened because your throat and ears have the same nerves. It does not mean that there is an ear infection.
- Your child’s throat will look white – this is normal while it heals. Some children get a throat infection after surgery; usually it is because they have not been eating properly. If this happens, you may notice a fever and a bad smell from the throat. Call your doctor for advice if this happens. Children will need seven days off school. Make sure they rest at home away from crowds and smoky places. Keep them away from people with coughs and colds.
- Before you go home, your nurse will give you instruction on when to see the doctor for a follow-up visit and how to care for your child at home.