

Tonsillectomy

Before the operation

What are tonsils?

Tonsils are small glands in the throat, one on each side. They are there to help fight germs.

Does my child need them?

Your child's body can still fight germs without the tonsils. They are only removed if they are doing more harm than good.

Why take them out?

Tonsils need to be removed if your child is getting a lot of sore throats caused by tonsillitis making them lose time from school.

Sometimes children have tonsils so large that they cause problems with breathing at night when they are sleeping.

Are there any alternatives to tonsillectomy?

Tonsils do not always have to come out. Children sometimes grow out of the problem over a year or so.

How is the operation done?

Your child will be asleep under a general anaesthetic.

The tonsils are taken out through the mouth.

The operation takes about 20 to 30 minutes but your child will be in the operating department for about an hour until they are properly awake.

How long will my child be in hospital?

Usually your child will be admitted to hospital on the day of the surgery and you will go home the next day, if your child is eating and drinking enough and feels well.

What can I expect after the operation?

Children usually cope very well with this operation and are able to resume normal activities soon after.

Sore throat

Your child will have a sore throat for around a week but it gets better day by day. We advise that you give your child regular painkillers half an hour before meals and before bed at **least** for the first 5-7 days. Pain can get worse between days 3 and 5 but this is normal before it gets better. Painkillers are most important as it is essential that your child **eats normally** after the operation to help the throat to heal.

Sore ears

It is normal for your child to complain of sore ears after having their tonsils removed. It happens because the throat and ears have the same nerves. It does not mean that your child has an ear infection.

The throat will look white or yellow

This is normal while the throat heals.

How long should my child be off school?

10-14 days is recommended to prevent infection.

Can there be problems?

Tonsil surgery is very safe, but every operation has a small risk.

The most serious problem is bleeding. Bleeding may need a second operation to stop it. It does not happen often – about one child in a hundred. **Bleeding can be serious.** If your child has any bleeding from the throat you **must** see a doctor. Either call your GP, the ward or go to your nearest casualty department.

Some children may be sick after the operation. This usually settles quickly.

Should my child have their adenoids removed at the same time?

It is often not necessary to remove the adenoids, particularly in older children.

If you have any problems or questions please ask your surgeon.

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Readability & Layout Reviewed by NHSL Patient and Carer Information Team v2.0 Apr2019 For review Apr2021