

Operation to remove the tonsils

Children's Ward Patient Information Leaflet

Introduction

This leaflet is for young people who are considering having an operation to remove their tonsils. It gives information about the tonsils and what the operation involves.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact a member of the Children's Ward.

What are tonsils?

The tonsils are two glands in the back of the throat. In children they help the body fight off infections. As the immune system develops and gets stronger, tonsils become less important and often shrink by the time a person becomes an adult. This is because your body develops other ways of fighting off infections.

What is the operation for?

Ear, nose and throat doctors may recommend taking tonsils out for several reasons:

- If someone keeps having attacks of tonsillitis. Tonsillitis where the tonsils become inflamed and it can be caused by many different viruses and bacteria.
- After an attack of quinsy which is an abscess on the tonsils. An abscess is a collection of pus caused by a bacterial infection.
- Occasionally, because the tonsils are too large and causing difficulty with breathing at night.

The operation is carried out using a general anaesthetic. This means you will be asleep for the operation. The person who gives you the general anaesthetic is called an anaesthetist.

The anaesthetic is given to you through a cannula that is put into the back of your hand. A cannula is a thin, plastic tube (please see figure 1).

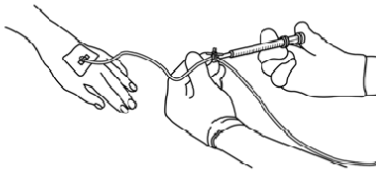


Figure 1 shows a cannula

What are the benefits of the operation?

The benefits are:

- You should not have tonsillitis again. This does not mean you will never have a sore throat again.
- Removing tonsils that are too large may improve night time breathing.

What are the risks of the operation?

As with any operation, there are some risks:

- Very rarely, some people have bleeding in the throat after the operation. If this happens on the day of your operation, you may need another operation to stop it.

If your throat bleeds during the first two weeks after the operation, it is usually due to a throat infection. If this happens, you will need to come back to hospital for treatment. If the bleeding does not stop, you may need another operation.

- Capped, crowned or loose teeth are fragile and may come out or become damaged during the operation, if the surgeon does not know they are there. For this reason, please make sure you tell the nurses or doctors about these before your operation.
- There are some very rare risks if you have a general anaesthetic. Your anaesthetist will discuss these with you before you have your operation.
- After the anaesthetic, some people feel sick or are sick. You may have a headache, sore throat or feel dizzy or lightheaded but this should not last very long.

You can discuss the risks with your doctor.

Are there any alternatives?

Antibiotics, which are medicines that kill bacteria, may be used to treat infection of the tonsils. However, antibiotics do not work in the long term. That is why if people keep getting infections of their tonsils, the doctor will advise them to have their tonsils taken out.

What do I need to do before the operation?

If you are having your operation in the morning, you must not eat food or drink milky drinks (like hot chocolate) from midnight the night before. You can drink water or squash until 6am, on morning of your operation. After this, you must not drink (or eat) anything until after your operation.

If you are having your operation in the afternoon, you must not eat food or drink milky drinks (like hot chocolate) from 7am on the morning of your operation. You can drink water or squash until 10.30am that morning. After this, you must not drink (or eat) anything until after your operation.

If your operation is in the afternoon, it is a good idea to bring an overnight bag, just in case you need it. Include pyjamas, slippers, wash things, hairbrush, toothbrush and toothpaste. You should also bring any medications that you take, like inhalers.

You must bring your mum, dad or guardian with you.

What happens when I come for the operation?

You will have an appointment for the morning or the afternoon.

When you arrive at the Children's Ward, a nurse will ask you some questions and do some tests such as taking your:

- blood pressure
- heart rate
- breathing rate

The nurse will put a wrist band on each of your wrists and put cream on the backs of your hands. This cream is sometimes called magic cream. It makes the back of your hands numb so that you do not feel any pain. It is used so that when the anaesthetist puts a cannula into your hand to give you the anaesthetic, you will not feel this being put in.

The surgeon will come and see you and explain the operation to you. If you want to have the operation, the nurse will ask you and, if you are under the age of 18, your parent/guardian, to sign a consent form. This means that you are giving your permission for the surgeon to do the operation.

The anaesthetist will come and see you to check that you are well enough to have the operation.

The surgeon has a lot of operations to do and so there is a list of these. The surgeon does the operations in the order on this list.

The nurse will be able to give you a rough idea of the time you will have your operation. However, sometimes there are delays if operations take a bit longer than they thought.

If you have any questions or worries, please ask the nurse who is looking after you.

What happens when I go for the operation?

A nurse will take you to the anaesthetic room to have your anaesthetic. Your mum, dad or guardian (only one of them) can go with you to the anaesthetic room and stay with you until you are asleep. Nurses will be looking after you all the time that you are asleep.

What happens after the operation?

When you wake up, you will be in a recovery room with a nurse. When the nurse is happy that you have recovered, they will take you back to the Children's Ward to your mum, dad or guardian.

You may still have a cannula in your hand when you go back to the ward. This can be used to give you medicine, if you need it. For example, some people feel sick after having a general anaesthetic. If you feel sick, tell your nurse and we can give you some anti-sickness medicine. We will take the cannula out before you go home.

When you are back on the Children's Ward, the nurse will give you a drink and some food, if you want it.

Will it hurt?

Some people have pain for a couple of days after the operation. We will give you medicine to get rid of the pain (painkillers) while you are having your operation. This is so that when you wake up, you should not feel any pain.

We will also give you painkillers regularly when you get back to the Children's Ward.

You may have a sore throat for two weeks and earache after your operation. When you go home, we will give you some pain relief medicine that you can get from the hospital pharmacy.

You will need to follow the instructions on the bottle of pain relief, and do not have more than the instructions say you should.

It is a good idea to have pain relief medicine regularly, especially before meals. This is because eating and drinking regularly will help prevent you from having bleeding from your throat.

If the pain does not go away after a few days, please speak to your family doctor or the Children's Ward. The number of the Children's Ward is:

01384 244271

When can I go home?

After your operation, we hope that you will only need to be in hospital for about six to eight hours. However, you may need to stay for one night, if your hospital doctor thinks that is a good idea. Either your mum, dad or guardian can stay with you for the night.

After this time, you can go home when:

- you have eaten enough food and drink
- you are not having any bleeding
- you have had a wee
- you are not being sick
- you have a normal temperature
- your hospital doctor says you are well enough to go home

When you do go home, it is best for you to travel in a car as on public transport (buses, trains, metro), you are more likely to get an infection.

What happens when I get home?

One problem after tonsils have been taken out is bleeding from the throat. Although this cannot always be prevented, you can help reduce the risk by following this advice:

School – you will need to stay off school for at least two weeks until you are feeling completely well. This means you are less likely to get an infection. If you get an infection, you are more likely to get bleeding from your throat.

Eating and drinking – we recommend that you eat normal food.

You will probably find it hard to swallow after having your tonsils out. However, it is important to eat solid foods because it will help your throat to heal more quickly.

It is a good idea to eat rough foods, such as toast and cereals, as this will help to clean the area in your throat where the tonsils were. This means you are less likely to get an infection and bleeding.

Have a lot of drinks but do not drink acidic drinks, like orange juice, because they will sting. Chewing gum and sweets can help reduce your pain, as they help to stop muscle spasms.

Please avoid people with coughs and colds, and smoky atmospheres, for the first week. This will mean you are less likely to get an infection.

What happens if I become ill?

If you feel ill, are sick or have a temperature when you get home, you will need to contact your family doctor or the Children's Ward. The number of the Children's Ward is:

01384 244271

If you have any bleeding from your mouth or nose, however small, go to your nearest Emergency Department immediately.

Will I need to see the hospital doctor again?

If you need to see the hospital doctor again, we will give you an appointment before you leave hospital or send you one through the post. This will normally be about two to three months after your operation.

Can I find out more?

The NHS Choices website has more information about this type of operation:

NHS Choices

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Tonsillitis/Pages/Treatment.aspx>

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please contact:

Children's Ward on 01384 244271

Russells Hall Hospital switchboard number: 01384 456111

This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:

<http://dudleygroup.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/paediatrics-and-neonatology/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email patient.information@dgh.nhs.uk

This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.

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此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

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Aceasta brosură poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru va rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

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