

# Tonsillectomy in Children



## Tonsillectomy in children

This information has been produced as a guide to your child's operation. We aim to tell you everything about what to expect before, during and after their hospital stay, and how to look after your child at home. If you have any further questions, please speak to a member of staff before your child's operation.



## What are tonsils?

Tonsils are small glands at the back of the throat, which are made of tissue that fight infection. The tonsils usually shrink and become less important as you get older. As there are many other areas throughout the body which are made of the same tissue, the body can still fight infection without them.

## Why take them out?

The tonsils are only removed if your child is suffering from frequent attacks of tonsillitis, which need antibiotic treatment and time off school. They may also have very large tonsils which can interfere with their breathing, particularly at night. Removing the tonsils will prevent these problems.

## Does my child have to have them removed?

Your Doctor will explain why they feel that your child needs to have their tonsils removed, and will answer all your questions. If you want a second opinion however, your GP can arrange this for you. Signing a consent form does not mean that your child has to have the operation, and you may change your mind at any time.

## Before the operation

You must let us know if your child has any disorders that cause bruising or bleeding, or if this type of problem may run in your family. If your child has tonsillitis, or feels at all unwell at the time of the operation, please also let the Doctor know, as it may need to be postponed for safety.

## What will happen during the day of my child's operation?

Your child will be asleep under general anaesthetic, and the tonsils are removed through the mouth. The doctor will then stop any bleeding. This usually takes around 30 minutes. Your child will then be taken to a recovery area for a short period to be monitored. You will be able to be with your child as soon as he or she wakes from the anaesthetic. They may be quite drowsy and disorientated for a short while, and there may be blood around your child's mouth but don't worry. This can be quite normal.

## How long will my child be in hospital?

Tonsillectomy is usually carried out as a day case procedure, and your child will be kept in hospital for at least 4 hours after the operation. This is to ensure that there is no bleeding from the tonsil beds. If you live a distance from the hospital, or if your child has any other medical complication, they will need to stay overnight. The Doctor will decide this and explain this to you at the time you sign the consent form. Either way, we will only let your child go home when he or she is eating and drinking and feels well enough.

Your child should stay off school for 2 weeks after the operation and avoid swimming, as this will help to avoid infection.

## What should I expect after the operation?

After the tonsils have been cut out, a scab will form over the raw area. This will appear as yellow slough, and is a normal appearance following tonsillectomy and not a sign of infection. It is important that you encourage your child to eat regularly and chew normal food as soon as possible, as the action of swallowing will keep the slough from building up and prevent infection.

After about 7-10 days the 'scab' will start to lift off and at this time you may notice some fresh blood which again is normal. This is usually a small volume of blood mixed with your child's saliva.

Your child may not experience pain immediately after the operation. It is quite common for pain to increase at day 3 after the surgery, and pain may also be felt in the ears. This is quite normal. We ask parents/carers to purchase their own paracetamol and ibuprofen and have it ready for when your child goes home. We will advise you on how to manage their pain. Pain will gradually improve over the course of 2 weeks.

Make sure your child stays away from crowds and smoky places during their recovery and away from people with coughs and colds if possible.

## What are the risks?

Tonsillectomy is very safe, although every operation carries a risk. The most serious risk in tonsillectomy is bleeding. If bleeding does occur, your child may need a second operation to stop it, although this is very rare.

Bleeding can occur immediately after surgery whilst your child is in hospital and may require a return to theatre to stop the bleed. Bleeding can also occur a week or so after the operation, and this is mainly due to infection. It should be quite mild but occasionally can be excessive. Your child may need to stay in hospital for a day or two to take antibiotics.

## Important signs to look out for if your child is bleeding are:

- Trickles of blood from the corner of your child's mouth.
- Your child may be restless, pale or clammy.
- They may be swallowing or gulping more than usual.

**If you are concerned in any way, you must telephone the contact number given to you when your child is discharged, or attend the Accident and Emergency Department.**

There is also a very small risk with any anaesthetic. Your child's anaesthetist however, is highly trained to deal with these complications.

During the operation, there is also a small chance that we may chip or knock out a tooth, especially if they are loose or capped. Please let us know if your child has any teeth like this.

### If you have any concerns, or require any further information please contact:

ENT Outpatients  
Acre Mill Huddersfeild  
Telephone No: 01484 343255

ENT Outpatients  
Calderdale Royal Hospital  
Telephone No: 01422 222336

For any help or advice outside normal working hours, please contact:  
Children's Ward  
Calderdale Royal Hospital  
Telephone No: 01422 223403

### If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :

Sister  
ENT Outpatient Department  
Calderdale Royal Infirmary  
Telephone No: 01422 222336

[www.cht.nhs.uk](http://www.cht.nhs.uk)

### If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce,  
obraťte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

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informacji w innym formacie lub wersji językowej,  
prosimy skontaktować się z nami, korzystając z ww.  
danych kontaktowych

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ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਉਪਰੋਕਤ ਵਿਭਾਗ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور فارمیٹ کی زبان میں درکار ہوں، تو  
برائے مہربانی مندرجہ بالا شعبے میں ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

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المذكور أعلاه"