

About Children's Tonsil Surgery

What are tonsils?

Tonsils are glands in the throat. There is one tonsil on each side of the throat. They are there to fight germs.

Does my child need them?

The human body can still fight germs without them. We only take them out if they are doing more harm than good.

Why take them out?

We will only take your child's tonsils out if he or she is getting lots of sore throats which are making him or her lose time from school. Sometimes children have their tonsils removed because their tonsils are large and block their breathing at night.

Does my child have to have his or her tonsils out?

It may not be necessary to take out your child's tonsils. You may want to just wait and see if the tonsil problem gets better by itself. Children often grow out of the problem over a year or so. The doctor should explain to you why he or she feels that surgery is the best treatment.

Before your child's operation

Arrange for a couple of weeks off school. Let us know if your child has a sore throat or cold in the week before the operation --it may be safer to put it off for a few weeks.

How is the operation done?

Your child will be asleep. We will take his or her tonsils out through the mouth and then stop the bleeding. This take about 20 minutes but he or she will be in the operating department for about an hour in total.

How long will my child be in hospital?

In most hospital, surgeons prefer to keep children in hospital for one night. In some hospitals tonsils surgery is done as a day case, if your

home is close to the hospital. Either way, we will only let him or her go home when he or she is eating and drinking and feels well enough.

Can there be problems?

Tonsil surgery is very safe but every operation has a small risk. The most serious problem is bleeding. This may need a second operation to stop it. One child out of every 10 who have their tonsils out will need to go back to hospital because of bleeding, but only one child out of every 50 will need a second operation. Please let us know before surgery if anyone in the family has a bleeding problem.

During the operation, there is a very small chance that we may 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.

Some children feel sick after the operation. This settles quickly.

Your child's throat will be sore

Your child's throat will get better day by day. Give him or her painkillers regularly, half an hour before meals for the first few days. Do not give more than it says on the label. Do not give aspirin – it is not suitable for children.

Eat normal food

Eating food will help your child's throat to heal. It will help the pain too. Always give him or her a drink with every meal. Chewing gum may also help the pain.

Your child may have sore ears

This is normal. It happens because your throat and ears have the same nerves. It does not usually mean that your child has an ear infection.

Your child's throat will look white

This is normal while their throat heals. You may also see small threads in your child's throat – they are used to help stop the bleeding during the operation and they will fall out by themselves.

Some children get a throat infection after surgery, usually if they have not been eating properly. If this happens you may notice a fever and a bad smell from your child's throat. Call your GP or the hospital for advice if this happens.

Keep your child off school for 10 to 14 days

Make sure he or she rests at home away from crowds and smoky places. Keep him or her away from people with coughs and cold. Your child may also feel tired for the first few days.

Bleeding can be serious

If you notice any bleeding from your child's throat, you must see a doctor. Either call your GP, call the ward, or go to your nearest hospital casualty department.