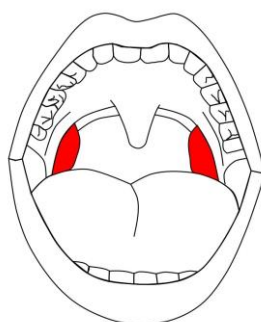


# ADULT TONSILLECTOMY

This information sheet is designed to help you make an informed decision about having a tonsillectomy. If you have any further questions, please discuss these with our staff before your operation.

## 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.



*Picture showing tonsils in the back of the throat (highlighted in red)*

## DO WE 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?

The most common reason for removing tonsil is if you have recurrent sore throats caused by tonsillitis or quinsy (peritonsillar abscess). A quinsy is an abscess that develops alongside the tonsil.

Tonsils are also removed if there is a concern that there may be a tumour in the tonsil.



## **DO I HAVE TO HAVE MY TONSILS OUT?**

You may want to just wait and see if the tonsil problem gets better by itself. The doctor should explain to you why he or she feels that surgery is the best treatment.

You may change your mind about the operation at any time, and signing a consent form does not mean that you have to have the operation.

## **BEFORE THE OPERATION**

Arrange for two of weeks off work. You will be provided with a copy of the discharge summary and sick note following surgery.

Let us know if you have a sore throat or are unwell in the week before the operation as it may be safer to delay the surgery for a few weeks.

It is important to tell us if you have any problems with excessive bleeding or bruising or if you take any blood thinning medications such as aspirin or warfarin.

## **HOW IS THE OPERATION DONE?**

The tonsils are removed through the mouth under a general anaesthetic. This takes about 30 minutes but you will be in the operating department for about an hour in total.

## **HOW LONG WILL I BE IN HOSPITAL?**

Often, patients can have their operation as a day case. In some cases, patients may require an overnight admission if you live far away from the hospital or if there is increased risk of bleeding. Either way you will go home when you are eating and drinking and feel well enough.

## **CAN THERE BE PROBLEMS?**

Tonsil surgery is a common ENT procedure but does carry risk. The most serious problem is bleeding which may need a second operation to stop it. About five adults out of every 100 who have their tonsils out will need to go back to hospital because of bleeding, but only one out of every 100 will need a second operation.

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 you have any teeth like this.

Some patients notice a change in how food and drink tastes after the operation.

## YOUR THROAT WILL BE SORE

Your throat will be painful after the surgery and will get worse before getting better. Take painkillers regularly, half an hour before meals for the seven to ten days. Do not give more than it says on the label. Do not take aspirin as it may make you bleed.

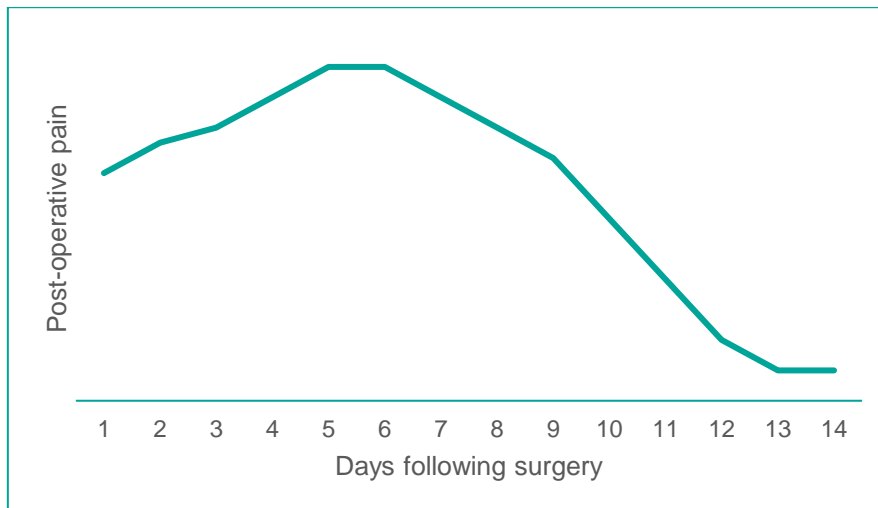


Figure 1 - Example of expected pain levels following surgery.

It is important to continue eating and drinking to help the healing process. Chewing gum may also help with the pain.

## YOU MAY HAVE SORE EARS

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

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Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) if you require this leaflet in a different format, or would like to feedback your experience of the hospital. Email [ruh-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ruh-tr.pals@nhs.net) or telephone 01225 825656.