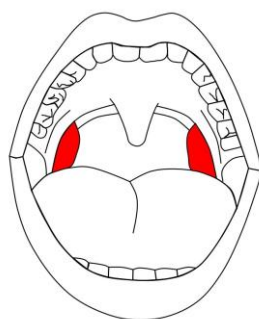


TONSILLECTOMY IN CHILDREN

This information sheet is designed to help you make an informed decision about your child having an operation to remove their tonsils. 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 when you are a young child. After the age of three they become less important and shrink over time.



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

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?

There are two main reasons for removing tonsils:

1. If your child has recurrent sore throats caused by tonsillitis which results in them losing time from school

2. If your child has large tonsils which are causing them to stop breathing at night (sleep apnoea). In this case, often the adenoids are removed during the same procedure (see leaflet on paediatric adenoidectomy).

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.

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

BEFORE THE OPERATION

Arrange for two weeks off school. You will be provided with a copy of the discharge summary after the surgery which you can give to your child's school as evidence if required.

Let us know if your child has a sore throat or cold 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 your child has any problems with excessive bleeding or bruising or if any close family member has any problems with bleeding.

HOW IS THE OPERATION DONE?

Your child will be asleep under a general anaesthetic. The tonsils are removed through the mouth and any bleeding is stopped. This takes about 20-30 minutes but your child will be in the operating department for about an hour in total.

HOW LONG WILL MY CHILD BE IN HOSPITAL?

Often, patients can have their operation as a day case. In some cases, patients may require an overnight admission depending on the age of your child, and the reason for surgery. Either way your child will go home when he or she is eating and drinking and feels 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 four children out of every 100 who have their tonsils out will need to be taken back into hospital because of bleeding, but only one child 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 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 be sore following the surgery and will get worse before getting better. 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 your child aspirin - it could make your child bleed. Aspirin is not safe to give to children under the age of 16 years at any time, unless prescribed by a doctor.

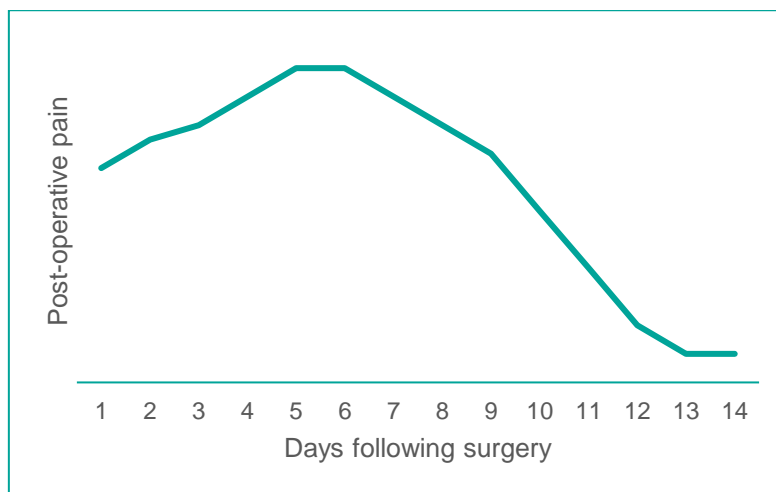


Figure 1 - Example of expected pain levels following surgery.

It is important to encourage eating and drinking a normal diet to help with the healing process

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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 or telephone 01225 825656.