

Surgical Patient Education

Tonsillectomy

What is an Tonsillectomy?

A Tonsillectomy is a surgery to remove the tissues at the back of the throat called tonsils.

This surgery is often performed after having enlarged tonsils or multiple infections.

The surgeon uses a special surgical tool to gently remove this tissue while stopping any bleeding.



What are the Risks?

- **Infection** - A Tonsillectomy is low risk, but any surgical procedure carries a risk of infection.
- **Bleeding** - There is a risk of bleeding as with all surgical incisions/procedures. It is uncommon but if bleeding does occur you need to call your doctor as soon as possible to go to an emergency room. This can be delayed and can happen up to 10 days after surgery.
- **Other Risks** - You can get scarring, changes to your voice, changes in swallowing or changes in your sense of taste, but these are all minimal and normal after surgery.

What happens during the procedure?

- You will arrive at the hospital and get an IV.
- You will then be taken to the operating room and be placed on monitors. You will be watched closely and then put to sleep.
- After being put to asleep, your surgeon will apply numbing medicine around the area and use a tool to remove the tonsils and possibly the adenoids.
- You will not have any stitches or sutures.
- You will then be taken to the recovery room to wake up and then later return to your pre-op room to go home.

Before Surgery

- You may be asked to stop certain medications such as aspirin or ibuprofen, be sure to check with your surgeon's office and anesthesia to see what medications to stop.
- You will be asked not to eat or drink the night before surgery, it is important to follow these instructions.
- You will need to prepare to be off work for up to 5 days.
- If you are older, recovery can be longer and you can have an increase in pain and soreness.
- You will not be able to drive for 24 hours after surgery and as long as you are taking prescription pain medication.
- You will need to plan to have someone stay with you for 24 hours.

After Surgery

- You will have whitish/pinkish surgical wounds to the back of your throat.
- Your throat and tongue will be numb for 6-8 hours after your surgery.
- You can shower and eat right away.
- You may be given a prescription for medication for pain sometimes this can also be over the counter. It is important to take the medicine as prescribed, and you can take it around the clock for the first two days to get maximum pain control.
- You can have bad breath and white patches in the back of your throat for a couple of weeks.
- You can eat soft and cold foods immediately after surgery to help with the pain.
- You will need to make sure you are hydrated and drink plenty of fluids to make your urine light yellow.

Recovery After an Tonsillectomy

How long will I be out of work?

- Prepare to be off work for up to 5 days, with a minimum of 3 days.
- The recovery can be up to 2 weeks for a tonsillectomy but this often does not affect going back to work.
- The important part of recovery is to rehydrate and make sure you are eating and drinking well.
- You may have soreness for 2 weeks.