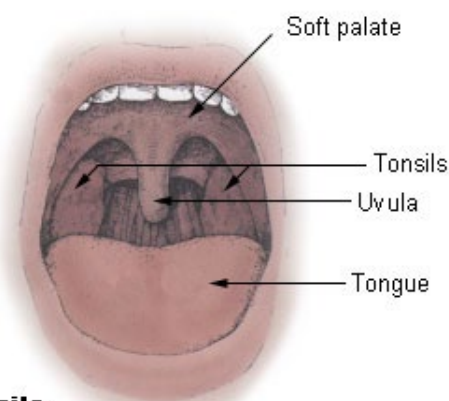


Adult tonsil surgery

This leaflet will provide some background information about tonsil surgery in adults. It may be helpful in the discussions you have with your GP or specialist when deciding on possible treatment. This information leaflet is to support and not to substitute the discussion between you and your doctor. Before you give your consent to the treatment, you should raise any concerns with your GP or specialist.

What are tonsils?

Tonsils are small glands in the throat, one on each side. They are there to fight germs when you are a young child. As you get older, the tonsils become less important in fighting germs and usually shrink. Your 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 tonsils out if they cause recurrent sore throats despite treatment with antibiotics. The other main reason for removing tonsils is if they are large and block the airway. A quinsy is an abscess that develops alongside the tonsil, as a result of tonsil infection, and is most unpleasant. People who have had quinsy often choose to have a tonsillectomy to prevent having another. Tonsils are also removed if we suspect there is a tumour in the tonsil. A rapid increase in the size of a tonsil or ulceration or bleeding occurs if a tumour of the tonsil develops. Tumours of the tonsil are rare.

Do I have to have my tonsils out?

You will not always need to have your tonsils out. You may want to just wait and see if the tonsil problem gets better by itself. The doctor will 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.

If you would like to have a second opinion about the treatment, you can ask your specialist. He or she will not mind arranging this for you.

You may wish to ask your own GP to arrange a second opinion with another specialist.

Before your operation

Arrange for two weeks off work. Let us know if you have a chest infection or tonsillitis before your admission date because it may be better to postpone the operation. It is very important to

tell us if you have any unusual bleeding or bruising problems, or if this type of problem might run in your family.

How is the operation done?

You will be asleep under general anaesthetic. We take the tonsils out through the mouth, and then stop the bleeding. This takes about 30 minutes.

How long will I be in hospital?

You will normally expect to stay overnight following surgery. You will be able to go home when you are eating and drinking and feel well enough.

Possible complications

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. Up to 10 adults out of every 100 who have their tonsils out may need to be taken back into hospital because of bleeding, but only 1 adult 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.

What to expect afterwards

- Your throat will be sore for approximately 10 days. It is important to take painkillers such as Paracetamol or Ibuprofen regularly, half an hour before meals for at least the first week, so please make sure you have some at home. Do not take aspirin because it may make you bleed. If you need stronger pain relief, the team looking after you will supply this.
- Eating food will help your throat to heal. It will help the pain too. Drink plenty of fluids and stick to bland, non-spicy food. Chewing gum may also help the pain.
- You may also 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.
- Your throat will look white. This is normal while your throat heals.
- You may also see small threads in your throat – they are used to help stop the bleeding during the operation, and they will fall out by themselves.
- Some people 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 throat. Call your GP or the hospital for advice if this happens.

Aftercare advice

- You will need 10 to 14 days off work.
- Make sure you rest at home away from crowds and smoky places. Keep away from people with coughs and colds and practice good hand-hygiene to avoid catching a cold.

- You may feel tired for the first few days, but this is normal, and you should ensure you rest.
- **Bleeding can be serious. If you notice any bleeding from your throat, you must see a doctor. Call your GP, the ward, or go to your nearest Emergency Department (A&E).**

How to contact us

ENT Outpatient Department (Townlands) reception: 01865 903274

Dorrell Ward, Tel: 0118 322 7172 or 0118 322 8101

Clinical Admin Team (CAT1) (Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm), Tel: 0118 322 7139 or email rbbh.CAT1@nhs.net

Based on an ENT UK leaflet authored by Matthew Yung, November 2015.

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

Reviewed by Mr R Almeyda, Consultant ENT Surgeon, RBFT ENT Department, December 2022
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