



Royal Berkshire
NHS Foundation Trust

Advice following a tonsillectomy

Information for patients

This leaflet is for patients who have had a tonsillectomy. If you do not understand anything or have any other concerns, please speak to a member of staff.

What is a tonsillectomy?

It is an operation to remove the tonsils (two structures at the back of the throat).

To help your recovery, please follow this advice:

- **Painful throat:** Your throat is likely to be sore for up to two weeks after your operation, though you should still be able to talk. The first week may be the most painful – this is normal. You may also get earache because the nerve that supplies your throat also supplies your ear. We will recommend painkillers to relieve this. However, if the earache continues, then please visit your GP for a check-up. We recommend painkillers such as paracetamol and ibuprofen - please note we do not supply these medications on discharge as they can be obtained over the counter. You need to take these regularly before meals, or as required, but do not exceed the stated dose. You can buy local anaesthetic mouthwashes and lozenges from your local pharmacy to numb your throat - please ask the pharmacist for advice. Please note, we recommend that you do not take any painkillers containing aspirin unless prescribed by a doctor. If your pain is not controlled at home by your current painkillers, please contact ENT department (during office hours) or the ward (out of hours) for advice. Telephone numbers are at the back of this leaflet.
- **Food and fluids:** It is very important that you eat and drink normally after your operation and do not just have soft foods. Eating and drinking normally is important because it involves using the muscles of the throat, which improves healing, keeps the throat clean and reduces complications such as infection and bleeding.

A mixture of crunchy, soft and chewy foods is best. Large swallows are less painful (i.e. eat at a normal rate).

If you do not eat normally, the dead tissue at the back of the throat may build up, and bleed, and may result in you being readmitted to hospital with a secondary infection.

Try to drink 2-3 litres of fluids a day. Chewing gum may also help – it increases the production of saliva and encourages swallowing.

Possible complications:

- Infection is recognised by bad breath, coated tongue, feeling feverish and unwell with an increased pain in throat and possibly ears. If you experience these, please contact the ENT Department (during office hours) or the ward (out of hours) for advice, as you may be developing an infection. This can easily be treated with antibiotics. The ward may put you in touch with the on-call doctor.
- Bleeding is recognised by blood in the mouth. If you notice bleeding from your throat, please attend the Emergency Department (A&E) immediately as the cause of this bleeding may be due to an infection and you may need to be readmitted.
- You may notice white spots on the back of your throat for about two weeks; you don't need to be alarmed and there is no need to see your doctor for this.

Advice for the first two weeks after your surgery:

- Keep away from people with coughs and colds. Avoid public places, e.g. supermarkets, and avoid smoky or dusty environments as they can irritate your throat.
- If you smoke, try to stop as smoking will make your throat sore and may cause infection.
- Avoid alcohol as it affects the clotting of the blood, which makes you more prone to bleeding.
- Avoid taking aspirin as this has the same effect as alcohol. You need to take the prescribed pain relief.
- Brush your teeth regularly, especially after meals.

- Gargling with warm salt water can help.
- Eat and drink normally.

Returning to work

We recommend that you take 2 weeks off work or college. However, it may take about a month to feel completely well again. If you need a fit note for your employer, please ask your doctor or nurse for this before you leave hospital. We recommend you spend the first week resting at home and slowly increase your activity, as you feel able.

Follow-up

You will not need any follow-up appointments.

Contact us

- Dorrell Ward 0118 322 7172
- ENT Outpatient Department 01865 903 274
- ENT appointments (CAT 1) 0118 322 7139 or email: rbbh-tr.cat1@nhs.net

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

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

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Next review due: December 2027.