Tonsillitis and quinsy: treatment

This leaflet is for patients with tonsillitis and quinsy. If you do not understand anything or have any other concerns, please speak to a member of staff.

What is tonsillitis?

It is an infection and inflammation of the tonsils. When the main site of infection is within the tonsils, they swell, become red and inflamed and may show a surface coating of white spots. Some cases of tonsillitis are due to glandular fever and may take much longer to fully recover from. If glandular fever is confirmed, you should avoid contact sports and heavy lifting for at least six weeks, because of a small risk of injury to the spleen.

What is quinsy?

It is an abscess or a pus build up behind your tonsil. It usually only occurs on one side and can occur after having tonsillitis. A fully developed abscess requires you to be admitted to hospital, where antibiotics are given through a drip. The pus usually also needs to be drained, either with a needle (aspiration) or through a small cut, after numbing your throat with local anaesthetic spray.

How are they treated?

- **Pain:** To ease discomfort, you need to take painkillers (such as paracetamol and ibuprofen) regularly before meals, or as required (with care not to exceed the recommended dose). Please do not take any painkillers containing aspirin, unless prescribed by your doctor. If the prescribed painkillers do not relieve the discomfort, or/and your pain has increased, please contact your GP or the ENT Department (during office hours) or (out of hours) the ward for advice. Telephone numbers are at the end of this leaflet.
- **Medication:** In addition to the pain medication, we will give you a supply of antibiotics to take home to continue treating the infection in your throat. It is important that you take them as prescribed and that you complete the course as prescribed.

To help your recovery, please follow this advice:

- Get plenty of rest and sleep.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Take pain relief before meals, to help with eating and swallowing normally.
- Ensure you complete the course of antibiotics.
- Keep your mouth clean by cleaning your teeth and having regular mouthwashes to gargle. Gargling with warm saltwater mouthwashes can also help.

- If you smoke, try to stop, as smoking will make your throat sore and may slow down healing. Your GP or pharmacist can offer stop smoking support.
- Try to avoid people with colds and coughs and stay out of public places, such as supermarkets, and smoky, dusty environments.
- If your symptoms return or if you develop pain in your throat and difficulty swallowing, please contact your GP.

When to seek urgent help

Go straight to your nearest Emergency Department (A&E) or call 999 if you develop any of the following:

- Difficulty breathing or noisy breathing.
- Being unable to swallow your saliva, or drooling.
- Difficulty opening your mouth.
- A muffled voice.
- Worsening one-sided throat pain or a swelling in your neck.
- A high temperature that does not settle despite antibiotics.

Returning to work

Depending on your job, you may need to take up to one week off work after you leave hospital. You may need a fit note for your employer, so please ask your doctor or your nurse before you leave hospital.

Follow-up

You will not need a follow-up appointment. However, your doctor may refer you for a tonsillectomy (surgery to remove the tonsils) if you have had more than one quinsy, or a quinsy alongside a history of repeated tonsillitis. If you agree, you will be listed for a tonsillectomy and you will be added to the waiting list for the operation.

How to contact us

Clinical Admin Team (CAT1)
(Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm)
Tel: 0118 322 7139 or email rbbh.CAT1@nhs.net
Greenlands Ward Tel: 0118 322 7172 / 8101

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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