

Tonsillectomy

A general anaesthetic requires your child to be starved beforehand. On the day of the operation (date) your child should not have anything to eat (including chewing gum), or milk to drink from (time). They may have only water or weak squash up to (time). If breastfeeding, the last breast feed can be given at (time). If you do not follow these instructions your child's procedure may be delayed or even cancelled.

Introduction

The aim of this leaflet is to answer some of the questions that you or your child may have about their operation. You will also have an opportunity to discuss any further concerns with us, on admission.

What is a tonsillectomy?

A tonsillectomy is the surgical procedure to remove the tonsils. The tonsils are situated at the back of the mouth. The normal reason for a tonsillectomy is recurrent infections or enlarged tonsils causing disturbed sleep.

Are there alternative treatments?

Some doctors may try to prevent recurrent sore throats with low dose antibiotics over a period of weeks or months.

How is the procedure done?

The tonsils are removed under a general anaesthetic, so your child will be asleep throughout the procedure. The tonsils are removed through the mouth. Your child will be away from the ward for approximately one hour.

What are the risks of the procedure?

The main surgical risk is bleeding. A small percentage of children may have bleeding after the operation and some will need a return to theatre to have this stopped. There is also a

risk of bleeding for up to one week post-operatively. The throat is sore after the operation and regular painkillers are required.

Every anaesthetic carries a risk, but this is small. The anaesthetic will be given by an anaesthetist (a specially trained doctor). After having an anaesthetic some children may feel sick or vomit. They may have a headache, sore throat, feel dizzy or be upset. These side effects are usually not severe and are short-lived.

What shall I bring to hospital?

For some children it is reassuring if they can bring a familiar toy from home. A play specialist may be involved in your child's care, and they will be able to provide a range of suitable toys and activities. A hospital gown will be provided to wear to theatre. However, children may want to bring their own nightwear, slippers and dressing gown to change into afterwards.

What happens on admission?

The surgeon will explain the procedure to you on the ward, and can discuss any worries that you may have. An anaesthetist will also visit you to explain the anaesthetic. If your child has any medical problems, for instance, allergies, please tell the surgeon and anaesthetist about these. Your child may also have 'magic cream' (local anaesthetic) applied to the back of their hands so that the anaesthetic injection will be less painful. One parent/carer will be able to accompany your child to the anaesthetic room and stay with them until they are asleep.

What happens after the operation?

After your child has had their operation they will be taken into the recovery room to wake up. Once they are sufficiently recovered, you may be able to accompany the nurse to collect them and bring them back to the ward. Children are given pain relief during their operation. If necessary, further pain relief will be given on the ward. It is possible that your child may vomit following surgery - medicine can be given to relieve this if the vomiting persists.

Please note: only two visitors per bedside are allowed on the ward at any one time.

When can we go home?

Your child will need an overnight stay on the children's ward, where there will be an opportunity for a parent/carer to stay overnight. On the morning following the operation, your child will be seen by a specialist Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT) doctor, and will be allowed to go home when they are comfortable and eating and drinking well.

Advice following tonsillectomy

- When your child returns home after the operation they must rest for a few days. Please keep out of contact with non-family members, avoid crowded areas and stay in a smoke-free zone for two weeks following surgery. This is to prevent infection. Your child will need to have 10 days off school.

- When your child goes home make sure that they eat and drink normally, as this helps the throat to heal. You will need to ensure that you have enough pain relief at home (the pre-op assessment nurse will advise you which ones), which you must give regularly for one week. This will keep the throat comfortable and make swallowing easier. Often, the pain is at its worst 5 days after the surgery.
- Earache and bad breath are common for a few days after the operation. It is normal for the throat to have yellow scabs where the tonsils were. These will be present for about 14 days.
- Please stay in the Reading area for 14 days in case your child develops any of the complications outlined below.
- Please avoid flying and foreign travel for three weeks after the operation.

Possible complications following tonsillectomy

Please contact Lion Ward if your child has:

- Any bleeding from the tonsil site. If your child has any significant bleeding please dial 999.
- A high temperature (38.5°C or above).
- Persistent pain which is not being relieved by regular doses of painkillers.

More information

Visit the Trust website at www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Contact us

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This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

Paediatric Unit: March 2018
Review due: March 2020