

Patient Information

Tonsillectomy in Children

Day Surgery Unit

We have produced this information as a guide to your child's operation. We aim to tell you what to expect during your child's stay in the unit and how to look after your child at home. If you have any questions, please contact us on the Day Surgery Unit.

What are tonsils?

The tonsils are made of a tissue that fights infection. There are lots of other areas in the head and neck and throughout the body made of this tissue, so even without the tonsils the body can still fight infection.

What are the benefits of the operation?

Your child may be having lots of problems with frequent attacks of tonsillitis or they may have very large tonsils, which interfere with their breathing. Removing the tonsils will prevent these problems.

What are the risks?

Every operation carries some risk of infection but we will often give your child antibiotics as a precaution.

The risk of bleeding from this operation is usually greatest in the first few days afterwards. It is rarely serious enough to cause your child to need another operation.

There is also a very small risk with any anaesthetic. Modern anaesthetics are very safe and your child's anaesthetist is an experienced doctor who is trained to deal with any complications.

What will happen during the day of the operation?

Your child will have a general anaesthetic and will be asleep throughout the operation. The surgeon will remove the tonsils and stop any bleeding.

After the operation, your child will be taken to the recovery area for a short time, to be monitored. Every care is taken to ensure any pain your child may have is controlled.

You will be able to be with your child as soon as he or she wakes from the anaesthetic. Your child will be quite drowsy at first and may not know who you are for an hour or so. There may be some blood around your child's mouth. Do not worry about this, it is quite normal.

Will my child have pain immediately after the operation?

Your child will have a sore throat and some stiffness in the jaw. You may also find your child complains of earache. This often happens after a tonsillectomy. It does not mean there is anything wrong with the ears, it will ease as the sore throat settles. The nurse will give your child some medicine to help with the soreness.

When can my child eat and drink?

It is very important for your child to eat and chew solid food (normal meals not just drinks), as soon as possible after the operation. This will be difficult to start with but actually makes the sore throat settle more quickly. Solid chewed food going down the throat will keep it clean, and help it to heal.

When can I take my child home?

Your child will probably be fit to go home later the same day but will be kept in the unit for at least four hours after the operation. This is to ensure that there is no bleeding from the tonsil beds.

The risk of bleeding within a few hours of the operation is small. If this happens, a further operation may be needed to stop the bleeding and your child will need to stay in hospital overnight. If there is any doubt about any bleeding we will keep your child longer in the unit and overnight if necessary.

How will my child's throat feel when we go home?

Your child's throat will still be sore and pain may be felt in the ears. This is normal and not a cause for concern. The soreness can stay for up to two weeks.

The most painful period after a tonsillectomy is during the 3rd to 6th day after the operation, not always immediately afterwards.

We will give you painkillers to take home. We will also advise you on how to assess your child's pain.

What will my child's throat look like?

You may notice your child has a yellowish coloration of the tonsil beds. Please do not be concerned because this is a normal appearance following tonsillectomy and not a sign of infection.

What do I need to do to ensure my child has a speedy recovery?

It is important that you encourage your child to continue to eat and drink normally. If your child does not eat but only takes drinks, the throat will become unhealthy with the risk of infection and possible bleeding.

You should avoid having friends around if they have a cold. If possible avoid your child catching a cold within the first two weeks.

Exposure to tobacco smoke is likely to be extremely uncomfortable to your child during this time. Try not to allow anyone to smoke nearby.

When can my child go back to school and go swimming?

Your child should stay off nursery or school for two weeks after the operation. Your child must not go swimming for at least two weeks after the operation. This will help to avoid infection.

Could the tonsil beds start to bleed at home?

Sometimes bleeding from the tonsil beds can occur after your child has gone home and overnight. Your child may need another operation to stop this and will need to stay in hospital for a few days.

Bleeding can also occur a week or so after the operation, mainly due to infection. This should be quite mild and another operation is not usually needed. If this happens your child may need to stay in hospital for a day or two and take antibiotics.

What signs of bleeding should I look for that evening and overnight?

It is important that you check on your child throughout the first night. Signs of bleeding from the tonsil beds could be:-

- trickles of blood from the corner of your child's mouth
- your child may be swallowing or gulping more than usual
- your child may be very restless, pale or clammy

What should I do if I think my child is bleeding that evening or overnight?

If you are concerned in anyway **YOU MUST** telephone the contact number given to you when your child is discharged.

Paediatric Ward D 6 East 01633 – 234014

Adolescent Ward D 7 West 01633 – 234002

