

ENT04lite Tonsillectomy (Adult)

Expires end of December 2019

A more detailed version of this procedure specific information sheet is available. Please ask your health practitioner at Joondalup Health Campus for a copy.

Write questions or notes here:



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This document will give you information about a tonsillectomy. If you have any questions, you should ask your GP or other relevant health professional.

What is a tonsillectomy?

A tonsillectomy is an operation to remove the tonsils, part of a group of lymphoid tissues (like the glands in your neck) that help to fight off infection from germs that are breathed in or swallowed.

Tonsillitis happens if the tonsils become infected (see figure 1). This causes pain, fever and difficulty swallowing and can make you feel unwell.

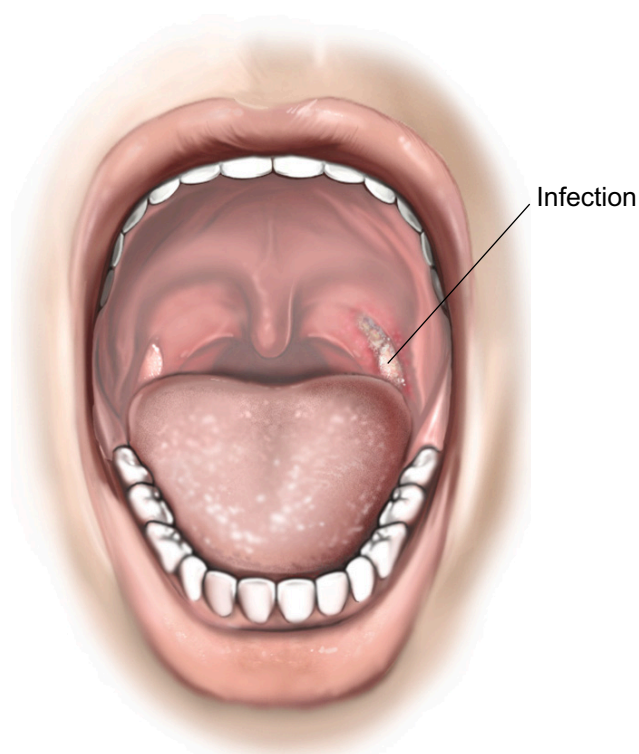


Figure 1
Tonsillitis

Are there any alternatives to surgery?

Surgery is recommended as it is the only dependable way to stop tonsillitis that keeps on coming back. In children, a long course of antibiotics may break a cycle of frequent infections. For adults, this treatment is less likely to be effective, especially following glandular fever.

What does the operation involve?

The operation is performed under a general anaesthetic and usually takes about 30 minutes.

Your surgeon will perform the tonsillectomy through your mouth. They will cut or peel the tonsil away from the layer of muscle underneath it, use heat to remove the tonsil and cauterise the area, or use radio-frequency energy to dissolve the tonsil. Your surgeon will stop any extra bleeding.

What complications can happen?

1 General complications

- Pain
- Bleeding
- Infection of the surgical site (wound)
- Blood clots

2 Specific complications

- Small pieces of the tonsil may be left behind
- Lingual tonsillitis
- Change of taste
- Feeling you have something in your throat

How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home the next day. The pain can last for up to two weeks and tends to be worse first thing in the morning. You will need to stay off work or school and away from groups of people for two weeks. Regular exercise should help you to return to normal activities as soon as possible. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Summary

If left untreated, tonsillitis can cause complications. Surgery is the only dependable way to stop tonsillitis that keeps on coming back.

Acknowledgements

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