

Tonsillectomy (child)

ENT07 Lite - Expires end of January 2027



This fact sheet is for general information about this procedure only. It is not intended to be used as medical advice or to replace advice that your relevant healthcare professional would give you. If you have a particular medical problem, please consult a healthcare professional.

© EIDO Systems International Limited. The operation and treatment information in this document is published under license from EIDO Systems International and is protected by copyright laws. Other than for your personal, non-commercial use, you may not copy, print out, download or otherwise reproduce any of the information.

eidohealthcare.com



What is a tonsillectomy?

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

What are the benefits?

Your child should no longer get tonsillitis.

Are there any alternatives?

Surgery is recommended as it is the only dependable way to stop tonsillitis that keeps coming back.

Antibiotics may break a cycle of frequent infections if the tonsillitis is caused by a bacterial infection. However, tonsillitis is often caused by a virus and antibiotics do not help. The tonsillitis may simply stop after a few years.

What will happen if I decide that my child will not have the procedure?

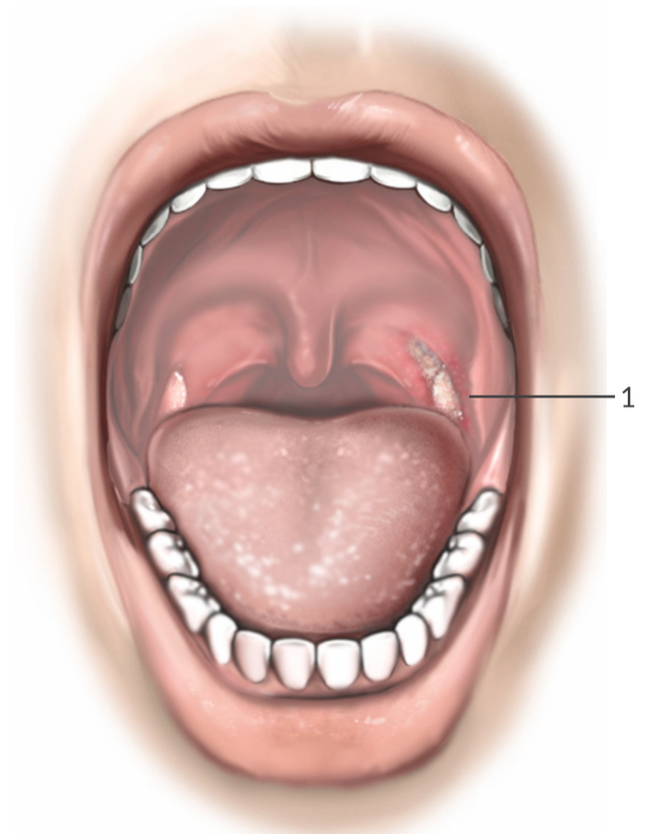
Your child will probably keep on getting tonsillitis but it may happen less often over time.

Your child will continue to have disturbed sleep. This can affect behaviour and learning at school. However, many children will improve over time without surgery.

The pus will need to be removed from the abscess through a needle, and your child will need antibiotics.

Rarely, the infection may spread further into the tissues of the neck. This is a serious complication and needs a procedure.

Tonsillitis



© EIDO Systems International

Illustrator: www.nucleusinc.com

1. Infection

What does the procedure involve?

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

Your surgeon will perform the tonsillectomy through your child's mouth using one of the following techniques:

- Cold dissection technique – Your surgeon will use a steel instrument to peel or cut the tonsil away from the layer of muscle underneath it
- Diathermy technique – Your surgeon will use a special instrument that uses heat to stop the bleeding
- Coblation technique – Your surgeon will use an instrument that uses radiofrequency energy to dissolve the tonsil

What can I do to prepare my child for the procedure?

Your child should try to maintain a healthy weight. They will have a higher risk of developing complications if they are overweight. If your child is having surgery to improve their breathing during sleep, it is less likely to be successful.

What complications can happen?

The healthcare team are trained to reduce the risk of complications.

Any risk rates given are taken from studies of people who have had this procedure. Your doctor may be able to tell you if the risk of a complication is higher or lower for your child.

Possible complications of this procedure are shown below. Some may be serious.

General complications of any procedure

- Bleeding on the day of surgery or in the next 2 weeks. Your child may need another procedure to stop the bleeding. If the bleeding is heavy, your child may need a blood transfusion. Bleeding can happen more than once.
- Infection of the surgical wound.
- Allergic reaction to the equipment, materials or medication.

Specific complications of this procedure

- Small pieces of the tonsil may be left behind. These remnants can continue to become infected and cause tonsillitis.
- Lingual tonsillitis. There is some tonsil tissue in the back of the tongue. Sometimes this tissue will develop tonsillitis after the real tonsils have been removed.

Consequences of this procedure

- Pain.
- A small amount of damage to your child's lips, teeth and tongue.

What happens after the procedure?

They should be able to go home the same day or the day after.

The pain can last for up to 2 weeks. It usually gets gradually worse over the first 4 to 5 days before beginning to improve, and tends to be worse first thing in the morning.

Your child will need to stay off school and away from groups of people for 2 weeks. This is to help prevent throat infections while your child's throat is still healing.

Most children make a full recovery and return to normal activities.

Summary

Surgery is the only dependable way to stop tonsillitis that keeps on coming back and the resulting pain, fever and difficulty swallowing.

[Keep this information document. Use it to help you if you need to talk to the healthcare team.](#)

Some information, such as risk and complication statistics, is taken from global studies and/or databases. Please ask your surgeon or doctor for more information about the risks that are specific to you, and they may be able to tell you about any other suitable treatments options.

[This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant healthcare team would give you.](#)

Reviewer

Matthew Campbell (MBBS, FRACS)

Illustrator

Medical Illustration Copyright © Nucleus Medical Art. All rights reserved.
www.nucleusinc.com