



Tonsillectomy

Instructions After Surgery

Tonsils are lymphatic tissue in the back of the throat. They are similar to the adenoids in the back of the nose. The tonsils can get bigger and smaller with infections just like lymph nodes. The tonsils often get smaller as people grow into adults.

Why are Tonsils Removed?

1. Recurrent infections
2. Sleep disturbance especially in children and often in addition to removal of the adenoids
3. Tonsil stones that are negatively impacting quality of life
4. Severe asymmetry or suspicion for a mass or growth

What is the process for Tonsil removal?

The procedure is done in the operating room with anesthesia. Typically after the patient is under anesthesia a specialized retractor is used to move the tongue out of the way and the tonsils are removed using one of multiple techniques including cutting instruments, radio frequency, or electrocautery.

What is expected after Tonsillectomy?

1. Tonsillectomy is a painful procedure typically worse in older children and adults. The duration of the discomfort is 1-2 weeks with days 4-7 usually being the most severe. Hydration and consistent use of medication to help with the discomfort are important
2. Children typically receive tylenol/acetaminophen with or without a steroid. Older children(>7 years) and adults will often receive narcotic pain medication that is already combined with acetaminophen. Discuss with your physician whether or not NSAIDS such as ibuprofen can be used in your particular case.



3. Ear pain is not unexpected after tonsillectomy and rarely represents anything other than referred pain
4. Significant bleeding after tonsillectomy occurs in about 2% of patients. This is most common at days 7-10

What is the usual follow-up after Tonsillectomy?

This is patient specific and should be noted in your discharge paperwork but most often is 2-4 weeks although it is not always required if you are not having an issues.

When should I contact the physician after surgery?

1. Fever > 102
2. Persistent pain not controlled with tylenol/acetaminophen, or prescribed medication
3. Significant bleeding from the nose or throat. Small amounts of bright red blood can be managed by gargling with ice water. If there is a significant amount of bleeding and it does not stop spontaneously you should contact the doctor on call and make plans to go to the emergency room

What are the risks of Tonsillectomy?

The risks of tonsil removal include the risks of anesthesia, bleeding, unfavorable scarring in the throat, and rarely residual tonsillar tissue.

Resources:

<https://www.enthealth.org/conditions/tonsils-and-adenoids/>

https://www.enthealth.org/be_ent_smart/how-to-prepare-for-tonsil-and-adenoid-surgery/

<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003013.htm>