

Information for adult patients

The purpose of this information is to help everyone who undergoes tonsil surgery to feel as good as possible after the surgery and to be able to return to normal food and normal activities as quickly as possible.



Common questions about tonsil surgery

How is the surgery performed?

Tonsil surgery is a quick surgical procedure that's performed under general anaesthetic. During the surgery, the tonsils are removed through the mouth. There's usually only a small amount of bleeding, but any bleeding is carefully stopped during the operation.

The operation can be performed in two ways: Either the whole tonsil is removed, which is most common in the event of repeated throat infections, or only the protruding parts that block the airway are removed. The ear, nose, and throat (ENT/Otolaryngology) doctor who will perform the operation decides which surgical procedure is best suited to you. The decision depends on the problems your tonsils are causing you.



Why do we have tonsils?

The tonsils are a part of the body's immune system. They are located on either side of the back of the throat and are composed of lymphatic tissue. There is no evidence that suggests that tonsil surgery will increase the risk of developing lower respiratory related infections.

What happens now?

If you haven't already been given a date for the operation, at the same time that you received this information, you'll receive notification of this by post, telephone or e-mail.



What's important to think about before the operation?

From 14 days before the operation, you shouldn't take any painkillers or antipyretics that contain acetylsalicylic acid (such as Aspirin, Magnecyl, Bamy, Treo) or Ibuprofen (such as Iprex) and Trombyl. These drugs can result in an increased risk of bleeding during the operation. Ask your doctor if you're unclear about anything concerning your medication. If some form of pain relief is required, use paracetamol instead (such as Alvedon, Panodil) during this period.

You're allowed to eat up until six hours before the operation. After that, you're allowed to drink clear liquids up until 2 hours before the operation and nothing more after that. Clear liquids are defined as water, tea, coffee, clear cordials/fruit juices without pulp. The liquid must not contain fat and not normal milk or powder milk. You must not chew chewing gum or use any form of tobacco during the last 2 hours before the anaesthetic.

Shower and wash your hair the evening before the operation or in the morning of the day of the operation. Don't use any make-up, perfume or nail polish on the day of the operation. On the day of the operation, take off all jewellery and remove everything on your body such as all piercings, earrings, rings, bracelets, necklaces and wrist-watch as well as items from your mouth, such as removable braces, piercings and rings, bracelets, necklaces and watches.

What do you do if you become sick during the days before surgery?

If you become sick, such as a sore throat or a cold, we kindly ask you to call the telephone number indicated in the notification you received about the operation date. Your operation may need to be postponed.

How long do you need to stay at the hospital?

Most people are discharged the same day of the surgery, or the day after, but it all depends on the routine at the hospital.

When can you go home?

You're discharged when you can eat and drink and feel well enough to be able to leave the department. The nursing staff decides when you can go home. You must not drive or cycle, but should be picked up by a family member or friend. Someone should stay with you the first night since you've been under anaesthetic and have just been operated on.

How long will you be away from school or work?

The time that you need to stay at home varies. When both tonsils have been removed completely, you should be home for at least 8 days. When only the enlarged parts of the tonsils have been removed, you should be home for at least 4 days.

What must I refrain from after having just undergone surgery?

You must take it easy after surgery in order to reduce the risk of bleeding. Bed rest isn't necessary. It's good for you to be up under calm conditions during the first few days, and there's nothing to prevent you from going outside if you feel up to it. If possible, avoid interacting with people who have a cold. You must refrain from strenuous physical activity, e.g. sport, heavy lifting and cleaning, for 14 days.

Are there any risks involved with the operation?

There's always a risk involved with surgery and when an anesthetic is used, but it's minor and all care is taken to make sure that the operation is as safe as possible. A few patients do unfortunately experience bleeding after having their tonsils removed. This bleeding most often stops by itself. Sometimes, the patient may need to return to the operating room in order to have the bleeding stopped under anesthetic.

The throat should never bleed once you've arrived home after the operation. If you notice any bleeding, you must contact health care services immediately.

There are wounds where the tonsils used to be and on these wounds grey-white layers form, that are the mucous membrane's equivalent of scabs on the skin and a sign of healing. These layers can smell bad and can cause bad breath. The layers start to disappear after approximately 7-10 days. The risk of bleeding exists up until the wounds are fully healed, which can take up to three weeks. You may have a slight fever the first day, but this is quite normal. If you're affected by the fever, you should contact the health care services.

If you find that the painkillers aren't sufficient and that you're having difficulty drinking enough liquid, you should contact the health care services.

What can I expect after the operation?

You may experience pain in your throat after surgery and therefore it's important to follow the prescription and take painkillers regularly. It's normal for the pain to increase 4-7 days after the operation and then subside. This is most common when the whole tonsils are removed (tonsillectomy).

The pain is normally less pronounced if only parts of the tonsils have been removed.

The pain is most often worse in the morning due to the fact that it's been a long time since the last painkiller was taken. At night, it's nice to sleep with a slightly higher support under the head than normal. It reduces the swelling of the mucous membrane in the area where the operation was performed, which can help relieve the pain.

The tongue may feel uncomfortable for the first few days after the operation. This is due to the fact that the tongue has been pressed down with a special instrument during the operation (in order to facilitate access to the tonsils). The discomfort is alleviated by you moving your tongue and thus it's good to eat and drink. The ears may ache without there being an ear infection. Ear ache is relieved by the painkillers that you take for your throat, but chewing gum can also sometimes relieve the pain.

Pain relief

After the operation, it's very important to take painkillers. These must be taken at regular times in order to have the best effect. Plan your mealtimes and eat approximately 30-60 minutes after taking the painkillers because the pain relief is then at its best.

Anti-inflammatory analgesics (for example Iprex, Diklofenak) and paracetamol (for example Alvedon, Panodil, Curadon) is to be taken as basic pain relief. Supplementary medicine is prescribed by the doctor. Make sure to plan ahead and purchase painkillers so that you're

prepared when you return home after the operation. You can buy paracetamol and anti-inflammatory analgesics without prescription from the chemist/drugstore and in many shops.

Nausea

Nausea and vomiting are common during the first evening after the operation. There may often be some old blood in the vomit (it looks dark), as blood often runs down into the stomach during the operation. The sickness usually disappears within a day after the operation.

Food & drink

It's important that you start to eat and drink normally. Dryness in the throat increases the pain experienced. Drink plenty of liquid (preferably not too hot), avoid sour juices that often sting. Chewing gum stimulates the production of saliva and relieves pain as well as helps you feel refreshed. Liquid and soft food can already be eaten the day of the operation, but hot food and food that can scrape the throat (for example crisp bread and hard apples) can be good to avoid during the first few days. Avoid alcohol and very spicy food.

Follow-up

Most hospitals don't have a routine concerning planned follow-up visits after the surgery. In the event of any complications (bleeding, persistent pain, high temperature), please see under the tab Important. However, all tonsil operations are monitored in Sweden via the Quality Registry for Tonsil Surgery. Read more under the tab In-depth. The Quality Registry helps us to improve health care.

You'll receive two questionnaires, the first after thirty days and the second after six months. The questionnaire received thirty days after the operation lets us know about any complications experienced after the operation. The second questionnaire, received after six months, contains a couple of questions about the presence of any discomfort after the tonsil operation, which we are also interested to find out about.

It's of great importance to receive your answers, even if you haven't experienced any discomfort.

It's important that you answer both questionnaires!

Important

The most serious thing that can happen after the operation is that there is bleeding. In that case, you must contact health care services **IMMEDIATELY**. Other problems include infection or insufficient pain relief that can present problems when it comes to drinking enough.

Important make sure to

- **WHAT** you must do and **WHOM** you should contact in the event of any problems!
- have any **IMPORTANT** telephone numbers ready if you need them!

Contact health care services **IMMEDIATELY** if child's/person's throat is bleeding!

Contact health care services for advice if:

- there is any blood in the saliva
- the child/person has a hard time drinking liquid
- the child/person suffer from pain despite taking the recommended medication regularly
- the patient has a fever and is affected by it, contact health care services for advice (a slight fever after the operation is not dangerous).