

Tonsillectomy: *Preparing for Surgery*

Tonsils are lumps of tissue on both sides of the back of the throat. They are just above and behind the tongue. Tonsils trap germs that enter the body through the throat and help fight infections.

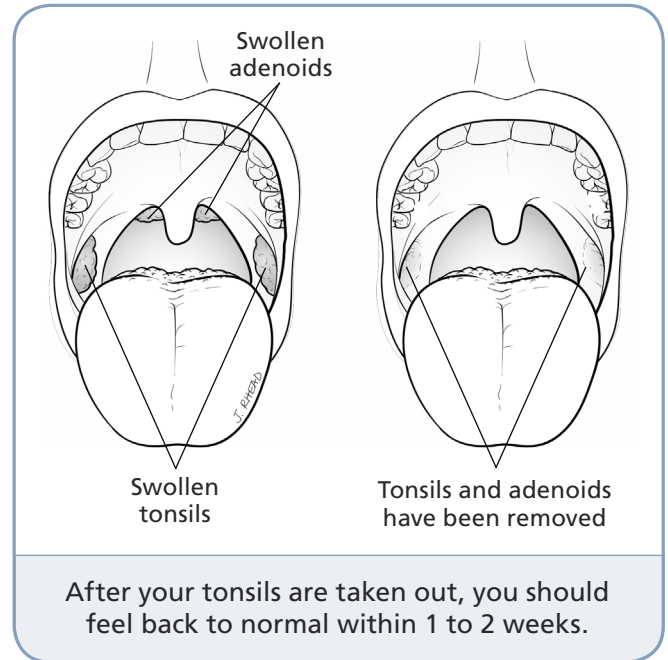
Adenoids are another kind of tissue just above and behind the roof of the mouth. They are located where the nose and mouth join. Adenoids work with the tonsils to help protect the body from infections.

What is a tonsillectomy?

Tonsillectomy is surgery to remove your tonsils. Your doctor may recommend this type of surgery if your tonsils become swollen or infected often and medicine doesn't help. You may have your adenoids removed at the same time. Having a tonsillectomy won't make you have more infections. Your body can fight infections in other ways.

Your doctor may recommend removing your tonsils, adenoids, or both if you have these symptoms:

- Frequent or ongoing sore throats or throat infections
- Trouble breathing or swallowing
- Swollen tonsils or unusual tissue growth
- Ongoing bad breath



Talking with your doctor about this procedure

Before your tonsillectomy, your doctor will meet with you to describe the surgery. The doctor will also talk about the potential benefits, risks, and alternatives to it. Ask any questions that you have. This conversation with your doctor is the most important part of learning about tonsillectomy.

Potential benefits	Risks and possible problems	Alternatives
Benefits may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less sore throats and infections • Better breathing and swallowing • Better overall health 	Problems with tonsillectomy are not common, but any surgery can have these risks and possible problems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allergic reaction to the medicine used to put you to sleep (anesthesia) • Bleeding during or after surgery • Infection (rare) 	There may be alternatives to tonsillectomy like these: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medicines to treat or prevent infections (antibiotics) • Surgery to remove tissue samples for testing

How do I prepare for surgery?

Before your surgery, you'll need to talk to your doctor about these things:

- Medicines.** Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take. This includes prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and supplements. Your doctor may ask you to **stop** taking certain anti-inflammatory medicines like aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), or naproxen (Aleve). These medicines make it harder for bleeding to stop.
- Medical history.** Tell your doctor if you have ever had bad reactions to anesthesia, antibiotics, or other medicines.
- Questions.** Ask your doctor or nurse when and where you should arrive the day of the surgery. Ask about what to expect after the surgery.

What happens the day of surgery?

For most patients, tonsillectomy is an outpatient surgery—you won't spend the night in the hospital. When you arrive at the hospital, a healthcare provider will help prepare you for surgery. Your preparations will include these things:

Before surgery

- **Antibiotics.** You may be given antibiotic medicine to help prevent infection during surgery.
- **Anesthesia.** You will be given general anesthesia so you'll be asleep and not feel anything during surgery.

During surgery

- **Breathing tube.** After you are asleep, the doctor will put a tube in your throat to help you breathe.
- **Tonsillectomy.** The surgeon may remove your tonsils using a surgical knife or another tool. Once they're removed, the doctor may send them to a laboratory for testing or throw them away.

After surgery

- **Recovery from anesthesia.** After surgery you will be taken to a recovery area. You will be watched until you awake from the anesthesia.
- **Pain management.** Most patients have pain after surgery. You may feel it in your throat, ears, jaw, or neck. You will be given a liquid pain medicine. If the medicine does not help with your pain, be sure to tell your doctor or nurse.
- **Going home.** You will remain in the hospital or clinic until your doctor feels you are ready to go home.

You'll also need to have someone drive you home after the surgery and stay with you for the rest of the day.

What should I expect during the first few days after surgery?

After the surgery, you'll have some side effects for several days. You should be back to normal within 2 weeks. These are some things you might experience:

- **Pain.** Most patients feel pain in their throat, ears, jaw, or neck. Taking your pain medicine as your doctor recommends will help.
- **Light bleeding.** You may have a small amount of blood in your mouth.
- **Trouble swallowing.**
- **Nausea and vomiting.**
- **Bad breath.**
- **A low fever** (less than 101° F).
- **White patches of skin** over the surgery site.