

## Patient Information Leaflet

### Department of Surgery

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## About Adult Tonsillectomy

### Why do I need my tonsils removed?

Tonsillectomy (removal of the tonsils) is performed to prevent repeated infections in the tonsils; to ease difficulty in swallowing or breathing if the size of the tonsils is impairing these important functions; or for the purpose of taking a biopsy to rule out malignancy (cancer).

### Procedure

A tonsillectomy is quite a simple procedure performed through the mouth. It can be done by cold steel dissection (using a sharp metallic instrument) or by using hot diathermy (a device using heat and low current for dissection). The outcome is almost the same and the method chosen is the operating surgeon's preference. There may be slightly more pain with the hot method but there is less chance of bleeding during and after the operation.

### Possible complications and implications

Though tonsillectomy is a simple surgical procedure, like any other surgery, there are possible risks associated with it. Most important of all is:-

- **Bleeding** after surgery. This is usually seen in those individuals who delay in starting to eat a normal diet after the surgery. If you start to bleed after being discharged you need to attend the Emergency Department (ED) and you may require few days' admission for intravenous (IV) antibiotics, analgesia (pain killers) and fluids. A very few patients will require a second visit to theatre to control the bleeding.
- **Infection in the throat** is also a rare occurrence after surgery and it is usually seen in individuals who delay in starting a regular diet after the surgery.

During the procedure, there is a possibility of:-

- **Damage to the lips.**
- **Chipping or complete knocking out of your front teeth**, especially if they are loose. If you have any loose teeth, please mention this to your operating surgeon.
- **Injury to gums** is also a rare possibility.
- **Dislocating your jaw joint.** Although this is a rare complication, it can still happen during the surgery. This will be reduced before you wake up from anaesthesia but it may lead to pain and tenderness while chewing food in the post-operative period and could possibly dislocate again.
- **Temporary change in your voice and nasal regurgitation** (bringing up) of food / liquid. It is extremely rare for these complications to happen and they improve with the passage of time.
- **Numbness of the tongue / altered taste.** This is an extremely rare complication and it improves with time.
- **Earache** is also experienced by few patients because of the common nerve supply of the throat and ears.

### Alternative Treatment

If you do not want to have a tonsillectomy as your surgeon has advised, then you will probably continue to have recurrent infections treated by antibiotics or other symptoms you presented with. There is no alternative surgical option.

I have read and understood the information provided about tonsillectomy and I am happy to be scheduled for it.

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Name & Signature of Patient

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name & Signature of Doctor

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**This leaflet can be made available in alternative languages/formats on request.**

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