

TONSILLECTOMY – WHY, WHERE & HOW IT'S DONE

A Tonsillectomy is One of the Most Common Surgical Procedures Among Children

More Than 400,000 Tonsillectomies Are Performed Each Year in the United States

The tonsils are a pair of soft tissue masses located at the rear of the throat. They are part of the lymphatic system and help to fight infections. Tonsillectomy is a common outpatient procedure that is performed when problems arise with the tonsils.

The following information has been prepared as a guide to help patients understand why the surgery may be necessary, in what setting the procedure normally takes place and how it is performed.

01 | Why It's Done

Tonsils are believed to act as the immune system's first line of defense against bacteria and viruses that enter the mouth. This function may make them particularly vulnerable to infection and inflammation, and is more common in children because the immune system is most active before puberty. Tonsils are removed when the following conditions are present:

- Obstruction
- Sleep apnea
- Speech, swallowing or breathing problems caused by enlarged tonsils
- Recurrent or persistent abscesses or throat infections

02 | Where It's Done

Tonsillectomies are performed in a hospital, most often on an outpatient basis. In preparation, the patient will be asked to provide a full medical history, including current medications and other information. Pre-op instructions will be provided and must be followed to ensure a safe and successful surgery.

03 | How It's Done

With children, a general anesthetic will be used. Adults may only need a local anesthetic to numb the throat.

During the procedure, which normally takes less than an hour, the surgeon will use a scalpel, cauterization method or ultrasonic vibration to remove the tonsils. Due to anesthesia, no pain is felt during the operation. Afterward, the patient is taken to a recovery room and vital signs are monitored until the surgeon and medical staff determine that the patient is safe to be released from the hospital, typically on the same day as the surgery.

04 | Recovery

It is common to feel some pain or discomfort during recovery. Therefore it is important to follow the surgeon's post-op instructions and get plenty of rest. Pain medication, water and ice pops as well as warm, clear broth may help soothe the throat during recovery.

If any bleeding or fever is experienced, patients should contact their medical provider immediately.

For additional information, please visit <http://www.medicinenet.com/tonsillectomy/article.htm>

Did You Know?
70% of surgical candidates are under age 18

References

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