



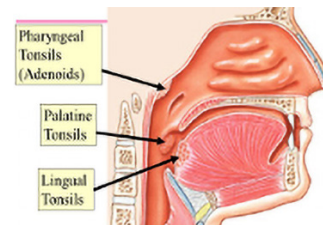
Tonsillectomy or Adenoidectomy Adult Frequently Asked Questions

WHAT ARE TONSILS?

Tonsils are part of the body's immune system. Specifically, they are part of Waldeyer's ring, a monitoring point of everything that comes into the body from the mouth or nose. Unfortunately, the amount of exposure the tonsils get results in their being "burned out" and useless by about the age of two. After that they serve no function, and can cause problems.

WHAT ARE ADENOIDS?

Adenoids are the part of Waldeyer's ring in the back of the nose. Just like the tonsils can both guard and obstruct the back of the mouth, the adenoids can guard and obstruct the back of the nose. They are taken with tonsils in the vast majority of childhood tonsillectomies.



WHAT IS WALDEYER'S RING?

Waldeyer's ring forms a complete ring of lymphoid tissue where food, air, and other foreign bodies enter the body. While it is a continuous ring, it is broken up into three different parts:

- Adenoids (back of the nose)
- Tonsils (back of the throat)
- Lingual tonsils (base of the tongue)

WHY ARE TONSILLECTOMIES DONE?

Tonsillectomies are done for a variety of reasons:

- **Greatly reduce the number of tonsil or throat infections per year** - As a part of Waldeyer's ring, the tonsils are naturally bombarded with bacteria. As previously stated, most tonsils are no longer an effective part of the immune system by about the age of two. In the majority of cases, the tonsils are pockmarked by "burned out" pockets that merely exist to collect bacteria.
- **Eradicate bad breath caused by tonsil stones (tonsilloliths)** - Halitosis, or bad breath, can be a result of the bacteria and food collected in the "burned out" tonsil pockets. These collections, called tonsilloliths (or tonsil stones), can often be seen in the tonsils and can smell quite foul.
- **Concern for cancer** - Tonsils are also sometimes removed when there is a concern for, or confirmed case of, tonsil cancer.

WILL A TONSILLECTOMY PREVENT ALL THROAT INFECTIONS?

Unfortunately, no. Removing the tonsils when they are the source of the infection will usually greatly reduce the frequency and severity of throat infections, but infections are still possible.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS OF SURGERY?

As with all surgeries, there are risks: infection; bleeding; need for further surgery; burns to the back of the mouth and throat. All are very rare, except bleeding, which can occur in approximately two percent of tonsillectomies and is most common seven to ten days after surgery.

WHEN CAN I RETURN TO NORMAL ACTIVITIES AFTER SURGERY?

You can drive and operate heavy machinery 24 hours after surgery (as long as you are no longer taking the pain medication). Most likely, though, you will want to stay home for at least one to two weeks after surgery to allow yourself time to heal.

You will need to avoid strenuous activity and heavy lifting over 10 lb. for at least one week.

WHAT ARE THE IMPORTANT AFTER SURGERY INSTRUCTIONS?

I have two rules and four recommendations for the recovery period:

- **Rules:**

1. You absolutely have to **DRINK PLENTY OF FLUIDS**. This is the single most important part of the postoperative instructions.
2. You will need to **avoid hard or crunchy foods for 14 FULL DAYS** after surgery. The sharp edges can induce bleeding.

- **Recommendations:**

1. You can eat whatever you want (as long as it is not hard/crunchy), but I don't want you to push food. As long as you are **drinking plenty of fluids**, a decrease in appetite will not be a concern.
2. Avoid acidic foods/drinks (orange juice, lemonade, etc.). The acidity could cause a burning sensation to the back of the throat.
3. Avoid milk products (milk, ice cream, yogurt, etc.). Milk products can thicken the saliva making swallowing even more difficult. Sorbet, sherbet, and slushies are good alternatives.
4. Avoid red foods and liquids. Remember, the most common complication after surgery is bleeding and it will be difficult to differentiate red Jell-O or Kool-Aid from blood.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT AFTER MY SURGERY?

You can expect some throat, neck, or ear pain following surgery, which will likely worsen for the first five to seven days, and may not resolve for two weeks or more. This is especially true in adult patients.

You will be prescribed pain medication, which may need to be taken regularly and around the clock for the first two days, depending on your pain level.

You may supplement the pain medication with Ibuprofen over-the-counter while awake. For maximum pain relief, please wait at least three hours in between the Ibuprofen and pain medication.

If your pain medication includes Tylenol (for ex. Percocet or Norco), please do not take any additional over-the-counter Tylenol while taking the pain medication.

You may also be prescribed a **topical numbing spray** (called a "Fire Extinguisher"). Please ensure you are strictly following the instructions for this medication of only applying **one to two sprays every two hours**. This medication can be **toxic to the heart** if used incorrectly, so it is imperative that you follow the directions.

You will have white patches in the back of your throat. These white patches (called the eschar) are the scabs that form during the normal healing process.

WHEN DO I NEED TO FOLLOW UP AFTER SURGERY?

A follow up appointment will need to be scheduled for two to four weeks after surgery.

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS I NEED TO LOOK FOR AFTER SURGERY?

Contact my office or go to the emergency room if your child has:

- Fever over 101°F
- Decrease in fluid intake
- Greatly increasing pain
- **Heavy Bleeding**
 - » In the event of bleeding, have your child gargle with ice-cold tea (the stronger the better). Ice-cold water is also useful if you do not have tea in the house.
 - » If the bleeding continues, however, please either contact my office or go to the emergency room. I can also be contacted through the Mercy Hospital, ADA Operator as listed below.

As a Christian I strongly believe in prayer, and pray for all of my patients, especially during surgery. If you would like me to pray with you and your family before any surgical procedure, please ask.

DO NOT hesitate to contact our office for any emergency at 580-421-6470. If a problem should arise when the office is closed, you may have us paged through the Mercy Hospital, ADA Operator at 580-332-2323; or go directly to the nearest Emergency Room.

More information can be found at www.LandrumENT.com.