

Ear, Nose & Throat - Tonsillectomy

Introduction

The Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on the NHS ability to provide routine elective services. We recognise that patients are waiting longer than we would all like and it is not always possible to identify when treatment will take place. This document provides you with information on how you can support yourself while waiting to attend the hospital.

Guidance for Patients

A tonsillectomy is the surgical removal of the tonsils. The tonsils are two small almond-shaped mounds of lymphatic tissue that sit on either side of the back of the throat. They are part of your body's system to fight infection and are only important during the first few years of life. This surgery is normally performed as a day case, which means you will come into hospital for the procedure and leave on the same day. It is performed under a general anaesthetic, which means you will be asleep for the entire operation.

Why do I need a tonsillectomy?

A tonsillectomy is usually suggested if you have:

- recurrent episodes of tonsillitis or quinsy – an infection of the tonsils which can cause a severe sore throat, high temperature and difficulty swallowing
- swollen tonsils that cause you to snore or hold your breath at night
- swollen tonsils that make it harder to breathe or swallow
- sore throats that often interrupt your work or every day life.

We will give you an appointment to attend a pre-assessment clinic before your surgery. The pre-operative assessment nurse will check your general health and may carry out some tests. These are to make sure that you are fit enough to have the anaesthetic and surgery. The nurse will also explain how you need to prepare for your surgery. It is important that you follow the instructions given to you by your doctor or nurse.

You should also receive a copy of the leaflets, **Having an anaesthetic** and **Admission to the Surgical Admissions Lounge (SAL) and Day Surgery Unit (DSU)**. These leaflets give you information about surgery, how to prepare for it, what to bring with you on the day of your procedure and when you can expect to go home. If you do not have a copy of either, please ask us for one. Alternatively, you can download these leaflets from the Guy's and St Thomas' website at:

<http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/patients/patient-leaflets/az-of-leaflets.aspx>

You will need to fast before having a general anaesthetic. Fasting means that you cannot eat or drink anything (except water) for six hours before surgery. We will give you clear instructions about this and when to start fasting. Further details are provided in the **Having an anaesthetic leaflet**.

If you smoke, please stop smoking at least 48 hours before your surgery. Smoking increases the risk of complications such as a chest infection or DVT. It can also delay wound healing. For help on giving up smoking, please speak to your nurse or call the NHS Smoking Helpline on 0800 169 0 169.

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What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

Urgent Health Advice

For urgent health advice about physical or mental health, when it's not an emergency, please call 111 from any landline or mobile phone. You can also visit www.nhs.uk. The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Life Threatening Emergencies

For something life threatening – severe bleeding, breathing difficulties or chest pains – please dial 999.

GP surgeries are still open

GP practice staff are also helping patients to manage their conditions at home while they wait for hospital appointments.

GP surgeries are still open and are working differently to how they did before the COVID-19 pandemic and GP practices continue to make best use of telephone, online and video consultations. Face-to-face appointments are still being given to those who need it.

When you phone or use an online form to contact your GP surgery to make an appointment, you will be asked some questions which are designed to help staff guide you to the most appropriate clinical person to help you with your condition. This could be a nurse, clinical pharmacist, physician's associate, GP or paramedic.

Contact Us

In some areas, we are experiencing a significant backlog following our response to the Covid-19 pandemic. We are doing everything we can to reduce this backlog including putting on extra clinics and theatre lists and opening additional sites to offer these services. We have also increased the ways we can offer appointments including offering more video and telephone appointments (as well as face to face appointments where appropriate).

Please can we request that you **do not contact your GP practice about waiting times**, as they do not have access to this information.

If you have any concerns or questions please use the contact details on your hospital letter, or if you do not have a letter with these contact details please contact our [Patient Advice & Liaison teams](#).

Keep Moving

Reducing your weight and getting active are two of the most powerful things you can do for your body and for your mind. Extra weight places additional strain on your lungs and heart, making it harder for the body to cope with surgery and respond to diseases, including COVID-19

Eating a healthy diet will help you get fit and recover quicker after surgery. Being a healthy weight also reduces your risk of blood clots and wound infections afterwards.

[Visit our weight management page for details of local support available.](#)

Improve Your Health

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected everyone which has caused a lot of people to think more seriously about their health. If you have decided this is the right time for you to make changes check out

www.nhs.uk/live-well and www.nhs.uk/oneyou/

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They can also provide some inspiration for you and your family. The Trust has access to many resources which may help you in making healthier choices, these can be accessed [here](#).

Good Mental Health

Mental health issues will affect 1 in 4 people at some point in their life. Although FHFT does not itself provide urgent mental health specialist services, we are keen that you can access help and support when you need it. Please visit [FHFT website](#) where you can access links to Mental Health support in the local area.

Ongoing health conditions

About 15 million people in England have an ongoing health condition.

Long-term conditions or chronic diseases are conditions for which there is currently no cure, and which are managed with drugs and other treatment, for example: diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, arthritis and hypertension (high blood pressure).

If you are living with one of these ongoing health conditions, there are many ways in which you can [look after yourself](#).