

Information for patients

Tonsillectomy, adenoidectomy, uvulopalatopharyngoplasty (UVPPP)

What is a tonsillectomy?

A tonsillectomy is an operation to remove the tonsils because they are infected, swollen or enlarged.

What is an adenoidectomy?

An adenoidectomy is an operation to remove the adenoids from the back of your throat. The adenoids are a piece of fleshy tissue located at the back of the throat. They are usually taken out because of infection.

What is an uvulopalatopharyngoplasty (UVPPP)?

An uvulopalatopharyngoplasty or UVPPP is an operation to remove the uvula, located on the edge of the palate. The uvula is the soft muscle that hangs from the back of your throat. This operation is done to help you breathe better when you are asleep and may help you to reduce or stop snoring.

What happens before my surgery?

Before surgery, some patients attend a pre-admission clinic where the doctor will explain the surgery and you will sign a consent form.

At the clinic, the health care team will ask you about your health, medication and lifestyle. They may test your blood, take x-rays and an electrocardiogram (ECG).

Your doctor will talk to you about what medications to take before you come to hospital.

It is important to tell your doctor if you are taking any blood thinning medications, such as aspirin, warfarin or clopidogrel (Plavix).

Please bring your medications into hospital with you.

If you use a dosette box or pill organiser to take your tablets, please ask your pharmacist to print out a list of your current medications so you can bring this to hospital.

If you do not need to attend the pre-admission clinic, we will telephone you to tell you when your surgery is scheduled and what to bring to hospital.

You may also receive a letter informing you of your time and date of surgery. Please make sure you confirm your date for surgery.

The day before your surgery, the hospital will call you between 2.30pm and 7pm to inform you of the time you need to stop eating and drinking and what time to come to hospital.

What will happen on the day of my surgery?

We ask that you shower before you come to hospital and remove jewellery, make up, nail polish and fake nails. It is advised that you leave valuables such as jewellery and large sums of money at home to decrease the possibility of items being misplaced or stolen.

On the day of your surgery, please make your way to the St Vincent's Day of Surgery Admission (DOSA) area, which is located on the first floor of the In-patient Services Building, Princes Street, Fitzroy.

When you arrive the nursing staff will check your pulse and blood pressure.

You will need an anaesthetic for your surgery. The anaesthetist (the doctor who will give you the anaesthetic) will meet with you before your surgery to talk to you about your health and the best type of anaesthetic for you.

A general anaesthetic (anaesthetic that puts you to sleep) is normally used for this surgery.

St Vincent's is a busy hospital so please be aware that you may need to wait up to three hours for your operation.

What happens during the surgery?

Tonsillectomy

The surgeon will use a scalpel or laser to take out your tonsils.

Adenoidectomy

The surgeon will scrape away your adenoids with a sharp instrument called a curette.

UVPPP

The surgeon will use a scalpel or a laser to take out your uvula.

These operations normally take one hour.

What happens after the surgery?

You will wake up from the anaesthetic in the recovery room and be transferred to your ward shortly after. A nurse will monitor your blood pressure, pulse, temperature and oxygen levels regularly.

The nurses will have a look inside your mouth after surgery to make sure there is no bleeding.

You may have an oxygen mask to help you breathe and an intravenous (IV) drip in your arm giving you fluid. The IV will be removed once you are able to eat and drink. You will not be permitted to eat and drink until four hours after surgery. This is because you may feel sick or vomit.

If you do feel sick or have pain after surgery, a nurse can give you tablets or an injection to help you feel better.

If you have a UVPPP you may experience some sharp pain when you swallow food or drink water.

You will be encouraged to drink and eat, as this will stop the small amounts of blood from causing clots in your mouth.

When can I go home?

If you have a tonsillectomy and adenoidectomy you will be required to stay in hospital for one night.

If you have a UVPPP you may have to stay in hospital for two nights, depending on how much pain you have.

Patients are usually discharged at 10am so the room can be prepared for another patient.

Before you leave the ward someone will:

- make a follow-up appointment at St Vincent's Specialist Clinics for you
- send a letter to your local doctor (GP)
- give you medication, if the doctor prescribes it
- give you a medical certificate if needed (you will need to ask).

Please remember to take all your belongings including x-rays home with you.

What should I do once I get home?

Your doctor may recommend one or two weeks off work depending on the type of surgery you have, in order to give your body the best chance of recovery.

You may have a sore throat for two to three weeks after the operation. Make sure you continue to take any pain relief medication that has been provided. You should also try to eat and drink as close to your normal diet as possible.

You should, however, avoid spicy food or fruit juices for at least ten days after the operation as they may cause your throat some irritation or pain.

Smoking is not recommended.

Do not take Aspirin, Disprin, Aspro, Ibuprofen (for example Nurofen) or any other anti-inflammatory drugs. You should also avoid supplements including vitamin E, garlic and ginkgo biloba as these can cause bleeding.

There is a small possibility of bleeding from your throat in the seven to ten days following your operation. If you cannot stop the bleeding by placing ice to the back of your neck you will need to go to the nearest emergency department as soon as possible.

Contacts

Ear, Nose and Throat Unit

St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne

PO Box 2900

Fitzroy Victoria 3065

Tel: 9288 4657

Liaison Nurse

Tel: 9288 2755

Waiting List Officer

Tel: 9288 2271

This information is intended as a guideline only. If you have further questions or concerns, please speak to your doctor.