

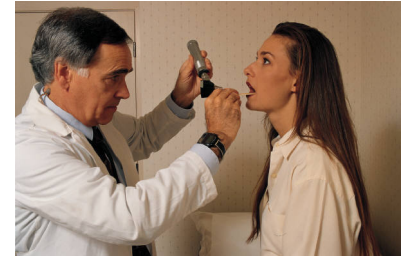
Family Medicine Clerkship-Plain language summary

Title: Strep throat: Solutions for adults with recurrent strep throat

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Plain Language Summary:

Strep throat is a common illness in kids, but can happen to adults too. These infections are often caused by a bacteria (called streptococcus) that can infect the back of the throat and irritate the tonsils which are a small patch of tissue that is believed to help fight off infections. With the infection (sometimes called tonsillitis or strep throat), the tonsils become sore and swollen. This can result in the common symptoms of “sore throat” which include pain, difficulty swallowing, difficulty talking, and may include fever. When these symptoms of sore throat begin, the doctor will usually do a simple test to determine whether the sore throat is from the bacteria or

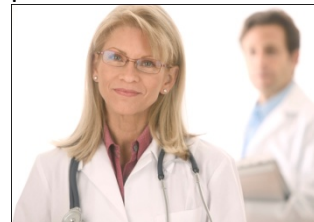


not. This test is done by sticking a Q-tip swab into the back of the throat and rubbing the tonsils to get a sample from the infected area. If this test is positive for the streptococcus (strep) bacteria, medicine to kill the bacteria, called an antibiotic, is given to eliminate the infection. Some people, especially kids, get lots of strep infections, and often have to take many courses of antibiotics over the years. Others may have infections that are resistant to antibiotic treatment. To help decrease the number of infections, sometimes it can be helpful to remove the tonsils from the back of the throat by doing a simple surgery so that they are less likely to become infected. This has been shown to be helpful in kids and new data indicates that it can be helpful in reducing frequent infections in adults as well. ¹

This surgery, called a tonsillectomy, is completed by a special surgeon who specializes in ears, nose and throat. It is usually done as an outpatient, which means you should get to go home the same day the surgery is completed! The surgery is short and due to the general anesthesia, you won't remember anything about it later. After the procedure, most people feel pain in the back of their throat. They may prefer eating soft and bland foods like applesauce and pudding for the first few days following surgery. Full recovery should happen after about a week. Complications are minimal, and may include minor bleeding either during or after the procedure.

If you're an adult with recurrent tonsillitis, talk to your doctor to see if tonsillectomy could be the right solution for you.

¹Alho, O, Koivunen, P, Penna, T, et al. (2007). Tonsillectomy versus watchful waiting in recurrent streptococcal pharyngitis in adults: Randomised controlled trial. BMJ. British medical journal, 334(7600), 939-939.



For more information check out:

Tonsillectomy: Mayo Clinic

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/tonsillectomy/MY00132>

Tonsillectomy: WebMD

<http://www.webmd.com/oral-health/tonsillectomy-for-strep-throat>

Tonsillectomy: National Institute of Health

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003013.htm>

Key Words:

Tonsillitis

Tonsillectomy

Streptococcus

Sore throat

Strep throat

This document was created by a medical student enrolled in the Family Medicine Clerkship at the University of Minnesota Medical School as part of the course project. The aim of the project is to present information on a medical topic in the format of a patient education handout. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Minnesota Medical School physicians and faculty. These materials are provided for informational purposes only and are in no way intended to take the place of the advice and recommendations of your personal health care provider. The information provided may no longer be up-to-date since it has not been reviewed since the date of creation. The information provided should not be used to diagnose a health problem or disease, or as a means of determining treatment. In the event of a medical emergency, immediately contact a doctor or call 911.

¹Alho, O, Koivunen, P, Penna, T, et al. (2007). Tonsillectomy versus watchful waiting in recurrent streptococcal pharyngitis in adults: Randomised controlled trial. *BMJ. British medical journal*, 334(7600), 939-939.

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