



Risks of Tonsillectomy and Adenoidectomy, Laryngoscopy, Bronchoscopy and Supraglottoplasty

Below are the major risks of taking out the tonsils and adenoids and supraglottoplasty. Note that these risks also apply to laryngoscopy, bronchoscopy and, sometimes, laser supraglottoplasty.

Anesthesia

The anesthesiologists at Riley at IU Health are very experienced. They are specially trained to work with children. They will talk with you about the risks of anesthesia the day of the operation.

Bleeding

The risk of bleeding is less than 5 percent overall. Most patients who do bleed do not need a blood transfusion.

Pain

These operations can cause postoperative pain. Your child will need to take pain medicine at least every four to six hours for a number of days, if not for several weeks.

Infection

Your child may be on an antibiotic afterwards to help with healing.

Bad Breath and Fever

It is normal to have bad breath and a low-grade fever for about two weeks after the surgery.

Weight Loss

Your child's throat will be sore, so he or she may not eat as well and may lose weight early on. Most patients gain back the weight after they have healed from the surgery.

Swelling

Your child may gurgle. While asleep, his or her breathing may sound worse the first few nights because of swelling and extra mucus that the body makes to cover the raw surfaces. Once that heals up, those sounds should get better.

Voice

There is always a change in the voice. This usually ends up being a normal voice but not necessarily the one you are used to. Before the surgery, your child may sound as though the nose is plugged up. Once the tonsils and adenoids are out, the voice may sound higher-pitched. This is really more of a resonance issue. Rarely, some children also develop problems with too much airflow through the nose while speaking or eating. This is especially true for children with cleft palates.

Burns

If your child's doctor finds any floppiness in the voice box during the surgery, he or she will trim it, perhaps using a laser through the mouth. There is a risk of burns from the laser. It is extremely rare but can be serious if it happens.

**Aspiration**

About 1 percent of patients who have floppiness of the voice box trimmed may develop aspiration. Aspiration is when a food or liquid dribbles down the windpipe. This is mainly in children who have cerebral palsy or other significant neurological issues. Even in these children, most of them eventually grow out of it, although it could take a number of months.

Other Risks

The risks listed above are the major risks involved in these types of surgeries. Other risks include dehydration, pneumonia or even death. These complications have happened to some patients who have undergone a general anesthetic, but those are rare events.