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# Chronic Diseases of Tonsils

## Guidelines

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### Definitions

Tonsillitis is an infection of your tonsils. Common symptoms include a sore throat in combination with fever, swollen tonsils, difficulty swallowing and swollen lymph nodes.

### Presentation

- A. Tonsillitis symptoms usually come on suddenly. They may include:
- Sore or scratchy throat.
  - Pain or difficulty swallowing.
  - Red, swollen tonsils and throat.
  - Whitish spots on your tonsils or a white, yellow, or gray coating on your tonsils.
  - Fever above 38 degrees Celsius (100.4 degrees Fahrenheit).
  - Swollen lymph nodes (glands on the sides of your neck below your ears).
  - Stomachache or vomiting (more common in younger children).
  - Bad breath.
  - Neck pain or stiff neck.
  - Headache.

In young children who are unable to describe how they feel, signs of tonsillitis may include:

- Drooling due to difficult or painful swallowing.
- Refusal to eat.
- Unusual fussiness.

### Causes

Tonsillitis is most often caused by common viruses, but bacterial infections also can be the cause.

The most common bacterium causing tonsillitis is *Streptococcus pyogenes* (group A streptococcus), the bacterium that causes strep throat. Viral tonsillitis (influenza) cause up to 70% of tonsillitis cases.

Bacterial tonsillitis (strep throat) causes other cases of tonsillitis.

Bacteria culture test should be done after confirming the diagnosis of tonsillitis to accurately treat the patient.

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# Chronic Diseases of Tonsils

## Complications

Complications from tonsillitis are usually associated with strep throat and Streptococcal bacteria. They include:

1. Chronic tonsillitis.
2. Tonsil stones.
3. Scarlet fever.
4. Peritonsillar abscess.
5. Rheumatic fever.
6. Spread of infection.
7. Tonsillar hypertrophy(table1).

## Treatment

### A. Conservative management

Bacterial tonsillitis will be treated with antibiotic medication orally for about 10 days.

Viral tonsillitis can't be treated with antibiotics as they won't work. The below recommended to relieve the symptoms of viral tonsillitis:

- Plenty of rest.
- Fluids to stay hydrated.
- Pain relievers.
- Throat lozenges.

### B. Tonsillectomy

While most tonsillectomies treat children, adults can also benefit from the procedure. It is recommended for 2 main reasons:

1. To treat breathing-related sleep disorders, such as sleep apnea.
2. To reduce the risk of infection in people with frequent or chronic tonsillitis.

### Indication for tonsillectomy

#### A. Tonsillectomy for chronic tonsillitis

1. Recurrent throat infection with documentation:
  - Frequency of at least 7 episodes in the past year, at least 5 episodes per year for 2 years, or at least 3 episodes per year for 3 years.
  - Documentation in the medical record for each episode of sore throat and one or more of the following:
    - a. Temperature >38.3°C (101°F).
    - b. Cervical adenopathy.
    - c. Tonsillar exudate.
    - d. Positive test for group A beta-hemolytic streptococcus.
2. Recurrent infection with modifying factors:

Assess for modifying factors that may nonetheless favor tonsillectomy in patients who do not meet the criteria. Modifying factors may include:

- Multiple antibiotics allergies or intolerance.
- PFAPA:
  - Periodic fever.
  - Aphthous stomatitis.
  - Pharyngitis.
  - Adenitis.
- History of more than one peritonsillar abscess.

### B. Tonsillectomy for obstructive sleep apnea

Tonsillectomy should be recommended with obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) documented by overnight polysomnography.

**Table 1.**

Palatine tonsil hypertrophy classification according to the criteria of Brodsky and Koch<sup>9</sup>

Grade	Definition
0	Tonsils limited to the tonsillar fossa
1	Tonsils occupying up to 25% of the space between the anterior pillars in the oropharynx
2	Tonsils occupying 25% - 50% of the space between the anterior pillars
3	Tonsils occupying 50% - 75% of the space between the anterior pillars
4	Tonsils occupying 75% - 100% of the space between the anterior pillars

## Coding

### A. ICDs

- J03.00 Acute streptococcal tonsillitis, unspecified.
- J03.01 Acute recurrent streptococcal tonsillitis.
- J03.80 Acute tonsillitis due to other specified organisms.
- J03.81 Acute recurrent tonsillitis due to other specified organisms.
- J03.90 Acute tonsillitis, unspecified.
- J03.91 Acute recurrent tonsillitis, unspecified.
- J35.01 Chronic tonsillitis.
- J35.1 Hypertrophy of tonsils.
- J36 Peritonsillar abscess.

### B. CPTs

- 42825 Tonsillectomy, primary or secondary; younger than age 12.
- 42826 Tonsillectomy, primary or secondary; age 12 or over.

# Chronic Diseases of Tonsils

## References

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