

Tonsils and Tonsillitis in Children

Tonsils are two tissue balls located at the back of the throat. They play a vital role and are an important part of the body's infection fighting mechanism by helping to fight germs and diseases. Tonsils deal with the germs before they reach mouth, throat, or sinuses. When these infection fighters are infected by viruses or bacteria, the condition is known as tonsillitis.

The symptoms of tonsillitis are: as the time passes, eating, drinking and swallowing things become difficult. The pain can be accompanied with fever, earache and headache. The tonsils can be seen too. Just open the mouth wide open and the two masses of tissues at the either side of the throat are tonsils. They are usually dark pink in color, but when they get infected they turn red. A white or yellow coating can also be formed on the tonsils. There is an obvious change in voice as it becomes hoarser. The infected child can also develop bad breath. The infected kid can also get abdominal pain and can throw up what he eats. Tonsillitis is caused by both bacterial infection and viral infection. Bacterium known as streptococci causes infections which require special treatment.

When the child gets tonsillitis, the parent should give lots of fluids to drink. Smooth food should be consumed to ease the pain caused by swallowing coarse, crunchy, and hard food. Food like soups, ice creams, applesauce, and gelatin are a good option. Spicy food should also be avoided. A humidifier or cool mist vaporizer can be placed in the child's room as that will make breathing more easily. The kid must be given maximum rest and complete bed rest for at least two days is recommended. The bacteria and viruses cause tonsillitis to spread by sneezing, coughing or touching. The infected child must cover his/her mouth while coughing and sneezing. A disposable tissue can be used instead of a towel or handkerchief. Things such as utensils, towel, clothing, etc. of the sick kid should be separated so that the rest of the family doesn't get affected.

The doctor inspects the tonsils using a wooden stick known as tongue depressor, which will lower the tongue, so that the doctor can have a good look at the tonsils. After that the doctor checks the ears and nose. Heartbeat will be checked. If the doctor suspects strep, he/she will take a sample of saliva from the back of the throat using a long cotton swab, which can gag up the child a bit. After a day or two the results are received. Some doctors conduct a similar test known as rapid strep test, which give results within few minutes. Antibiotics are given when the test results come positive for strep. The bacteria get killed only when the course is completed and the correct dosage is taken at correct time.

If virus is the cause of infection, there is no medicine for it and instead the

body is capable of fighting the virus on its own. When the tonsils infection becomes frequent and the child finds it difficult to breath because of tonsillitis, it is recommended to get the tonsils removed. But it is the last resort after all other treatments do not do the trick, because tonsils are very important to the body's immune system.

The tonsils are taken out by surgery known as tonsillectomy. After the surgery, the child won't suffer from sore throat and breathing problems anymore. The surgery won't even leave any scars. A day before the surgery, the child cannot eat or drink, to keep the child from throwing up during the operation. The operation is very short and last for only twenty minutes. Because of the anesthesia, the child won't feel a thing during the operation. And during the surgery, the tonsils are removed using an electric cautery, which is a burning tool, or a cutting tool. After the surgery, the child is given lots of fluids and after a day soft foods can also be given. Usually it takes about two weeks to completely recover from the surgery and the child can return back to normal activities.

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