

# Dr Gerrida Herbst

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## EAR, NOSE & THROAT SURGEON

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## Tonsillectomy

Although tonsillectomies are performed regularly, it is important to be aware of the facts and possible complications that may occur after surgery. Please be aware that these complications are rare, but in case you develop a complication, you need to know what to do.

### **Scab formation:**

A scab will form in the tonsil beds after the surgery. Over the recovery period, it may change colour from white to yellow to green to black. The tonsil beds aren't infected – this is a normal process. The scab usually comes off after 5 to 7 days.

### **Pain**

A tonsillectomy is a painful procedure. More so for adults than for children. You can expect an exacerbation of pain from day 5 to day 7 after the surgery. You will get pain medication to take home after the surgery, but you may still feel pain even though you're taking it as ordered. Take your pain medication as prescribed and not when you feel pain. The pain should be bearable. If it isn't, please contact the rooms so we can optimize your pain management. Post-operative pain may last for 10 to 14 days.

### **Bleeding:**

It may occur up to two weeks after the surgery. Small amounts of bleeding may occur as bits of tonsil scabs come off. If this happens, give the patient ice to suck. Very often no extra treatment is necessary. If the bleeding is profuse and bright red, bring the patient to our emergency room immediately. Emergency treatment will be started and the doctor in charge will contact me or the doctor on call.

The best way to prevent post-operative bleeding is to eat. We would like you to eat normal food – especially potato crisps, toast, biltong, dry wors, cookies and even dry crunchy breakfast cereal. Have lots of lukewarm fluids. AVOID very spicy foods, bananas and acidic foods, like tomatoes, citrus fruit and pineapple. Also DO NOT take any medications that contain aspirin in the post operative period.

### **Altered sensation of taste:**

This usually occurs because the nerve that supplies taste to the tongue may be injured during surgery. This is not permanent and your taste sensation should return to normal within 6 months. What you may experience is that your favourite foods don't taste they way they usually do. Patients who have had this complication report that all foods taste sweet.

Hopefully the above list hasn't put you off having surgery! **I would like to stress again that the above complications occur RARELY.**

**We wish you a speedy recovery!**