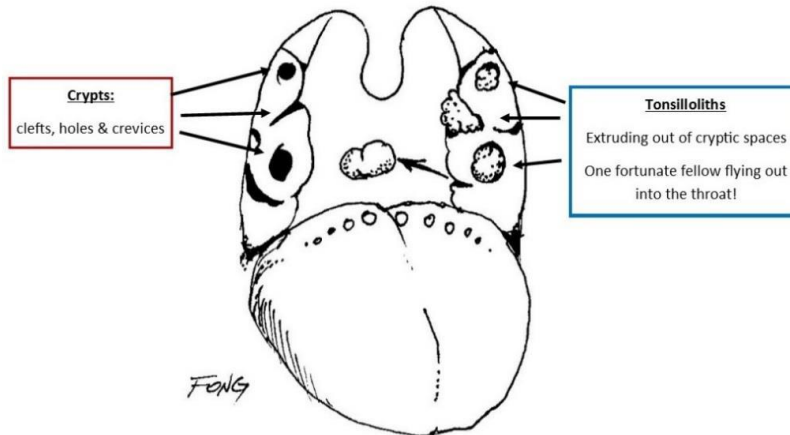


Tonsil Stones (Tonsilloliths)

What they are and how they form

The mucosal epithelium (the lining tissue of the mouth and throat) naturally sloughs off, but in some people this sloughed epithelium traps into a tonsillar *crypt*—a space or crevice or hole within the tonsil.

These crypts are natural features of the tonsil. This trapped epithelium can further accumulate, building upon itself much like an oyster builds a pearl, and then becomes colonized with bacteria typically found in the mouth. This imparts the foul odor and taste. And voila! A tonsillolith is created.



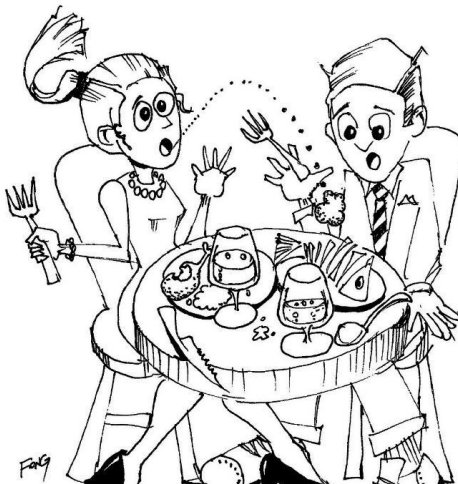
This typically is a benign condition especially if there is no underlying tonsil infection and the tonsil does not look odd or suspicious for something like a tumor.

Treatment

1. Daily warm salt water gargles even when not noticing the tonsil stones—this cleanses the tonsils and may prevent stone formation in the first place.
2. You can also use a Water-Pik to cleanse the tonsils daily which would blast the crypts and get them really cleaned.

If there has been no significant throat pain or recurrent tonsillitis with these, a tonsillectomy is not needed unless this condition worsens in the future, causing infections or throat pain, difficulty swallowing or if it significantly impacts your quality of life.

I try to dissuade patients from surgery such as a tonsillectomy otherwise; mainly with adults, postop pain can be quite severe (often the worse pain you could experience) lasting for at least a week after surgery.



Coughing up a tonsil stone on a date