

Ear, Nose & Throat Center of Austin

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Adenoidectomy

What are the adenoids?

The adenoids are two small lumps of tissue that lie on either side and at the very back of the throat, where it meets the back of the nose. The tissue that makes up the adenoids is called 'lymphoid tissue', which means that it contains white blood cells of the immune system. In childhood the adenoids are probably useful in developing immunity against infections; however, later on, and certainly in adult life, it is unlikely that they play any role in maintaining health and they usually shrink until they disappear.

What is an adenoidectomy?

The adenoids can often swell up and become inflamed (possibly due to a viral infection). This can make it difficult to breathe, especially when asleep. Swollen adenoids can also block the eustachian tube, a tube that connects the back of the throat to the middle part of the ear. Blockage of the eustachian tube can lead to a condition called 'secretory otitis media' or, more commonly, 'glue ear'. This reduces hearing until the blockage is relieved. The operation performed to remove adenoids is called an adenoidectomy.

Swollen adenoids are often associated with tonsillitis (infected tonsils) and are usually removed as part of an operation to remove the tonsils.

What are the reasons for having an adenoidectomy?

Adenoids are removed if they block breathing through the nose and/or if they cause repeated earaches or deafness.

What happens during an adenoidectomy?

The operation is performed by an ENT (ear, nose and throat) surgeon. It is always performed under general anesthetic, so the patient will be asleep during the whole procedure. It is a fairly simple operation. To stop the many blood vessels in and near the adenoids from bleeding, a pack made up of gauze is applied with pressure by the surgeon to the area from where the adenoids are removed. When the bleeding stops the pack is removed and the operation is finished. This is a very important part of the operation and the patient is not usually allowed to wake up until after any bleeding has stopped. On rare occasions, however, the surgeon may leave the pack in for 24 hours after the operation, if the bleeding is prolonged.

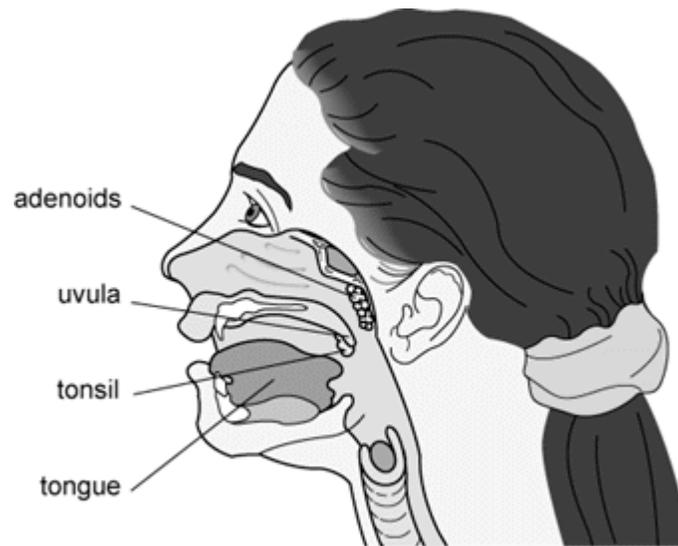
What happens before an adenoidectomy?

No special preparations are needed for this operation, apart from avoiding food and drink for about six hours before the procedure.

What are the possible complications of an adenoidectomy?

Very few complications occur after this operation, but one rare possibility is bleeding. Bleeding is more serious in a small patient because he or she often does not notice or complain about a problem. For this reason, the patient is always observed for a few hours after the operation. If bleeding does occur, the surgeon may insert a pack of gauze into the nose to stop the flow of blood. The pack is removed after a day or two. (This is very rare.)

There are possible complications associated with any operation, including infection in the area of the operation, which may cause a small amount of bleeding (which is not serious), increased pain and a fever. Infection is treated with antibiotics and bed rest and other rare potential risks as noted on the consent form.



What happens after an adenoidectomy?

You may be sent home with a week's course of antibiotics to be taken by mouth. Usually some moderate pain is felt at the back of the nose and throat, for which pain killers are given by your doctor. Normally, the pain disappears after a week. You should take it easy for at least a week and stay at home to avoid contact with possible infections at school. You should not swim for at least 10 days after the operation. There is no risk of bleeding or damage from sniffing or sneezing.

If there is any sign of bleeding or infection (fever, worsening pain), you should call your doctor immediately.

What is the outcome of an adenoidectomy? Adenoidectomy is an operation that has a good outcome, and you can expect to make a full and quick recovery once the initial pain has resolved.