

TONSILLECTOMY / ADENOIDECTOMY

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What are tonsils and adenoids?

Tonsils are composed of tissue that is similar to lymph nodes which help to fight infections. The tonsils lie in the back of the throat, behind the tongue. *Tonsillectomy* is the surgical procedure to remove the tonsils.

Adenoids are similar to tonsils, but are located high in the throat, behind the nose and soft palate (roof of the mouth). *Adenoidectomy* is the surgical procedure to remove the adenoids.

Tonsils and adenoids become less important in fighting infections after the age of three and begin to shrink in size by the age of five. Studies have shown that children who must have their tonsils and adenoids removed suffer no loss whatsoever in their natural resistance to disease.

When should tonsils and adenoids be removed?

Tonsils/Adenoids may need to be removed if they grow large enough to effect swallowing, breathing, or the voice. If breathing is obstructed, it may cause snoring and disturbed sleep patterns.

Tonsils/Adenoids may also need to be removed for repeated infections despite antibiotic therapy. An adenoidectomy may also be helpful in the treatment of recurrent ear infections, because the Eustachian tube (the passage between the back of the nose and the inside of the ear) is next to the adenoids.

How to prepare for surgery.

For at least two weeks before the surgery, do not take any aspirin, medications that contain aspirin or Advil, Motrin (ibuprophen) or Aleve (naproxen). Those medications are mild blood thinners and will increase the risk of bleeding during and after surgery.

Please advise the doctor if there is any history of sickle cell disease, bleeding disorders or other health conditions.

Generally, after midnight, the day before the operation, nothing should be taken by mouth, including liquids.

Removal of tonsils and adenoids is performed under general anesthesia. Usually, children and adults can go home the same day, but some children may stay in the hospital for one night after surgery.

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TONSILLECTOMY / ADENOIDECTOMY

Page 2

Possible Complications.

Any operation with a general anesthetic involves risk, although, today that risk is exceedingly small.

Occasionally, bleeding occurs after tonsillectomy, and less often, after adenoidectomy. Bleeding may reappear several days after tonsillectomy, when the crust (formed at the operation site) drops away. If bleeding occurs, it can usually be controlled easily, but occasionally requires a return to the operating room for more intensive treatment. Strict avoidance of aspirin and ibuprofen and naproxen as well as observing a soft and bland diet is important in minimizing the risk of bleeding postoperatively.

Throat pain is expected after tonsillectomy and is treated with pain medications that will be prescribed by your doctor. The pain usually lasts 5-10 days following surgery. Ear pain is often experienced when the scab or crust falls off after surgery and may be treated with drinking fluids, applying a warm compress to the ear, chewing gum or taking pain medication.

Dehydration from vomiting and/or poor intake of fluids may occur. It usually can be treated by encouraging oral intake of fluids at home (water, juice, popsicles, broth) but occasionally may require admission to the hospital for intravenous fluids.

After removal of the adenoids, complications are quite rare, and usually soon disappear, or can be corrected. The patient's voice may have a different (nasal) quality. Liquids may come through the nose when drinking. It is possible for the adenoids to grow back and require further surgery.

Rest and avoiding strenuous activity until the scabs have fallen off (2-3 weeks) is important. Most individuals need to remain home from work or school for 7-10 days.

Airway obstruction from swelling or because of anatomic or physiologic respiratory comorbidities are rare but may require monitoring in the hospital. Please call your doctor if you are experiencing difficulty breathing following your surgery.

If you do not have a complete understanding of these written instructions, or do not understand the verbal instructions that were given to you, please ask Dr. Davis or Salgado, with any remaining questions that you may have at 858 755-9343.