

About Adenoid Surgery

Q.What are adenoids?

A. Adenoids are small glands in the throat, at the back of the nose. They are there to fight germs.

Q. Do we need them?

A. Your body can still fight germs without your adenoids. We only take them out if they are doing more harm than good.

Q. Why take them out?

A. Sometimes children have adenoids so big that they have a blocked nose, so that they have to breathe through their mouths. They snore at night. Some children even stop breathing for a few seconds while they are asleep.

The adenoids can also cause ear problems by blocking the tube which joins your nose to your ear.

Q. Does my child have to have his or her adenoids out?

A. Adenoids get smaller as you grow, so you may find that nose and ear problems get better with time. Surgery will make these problems get better more quickly, but it has a small risk. You should discuss with your surgeon whether to wait and see, or have surgery now.

Other operations

If you are taking adenoids out because of ear problems, we may put in grommets at the same time. Please see our leaflet on grommets. If your child has sore throats or stops breathing at night, we may also take their tonsils out at the same time. Please see our leaflet on Children's tonsils. We will tell you what these operations involve if we are going to do them.

How is the operation done?

Your child will be asleep for the operation. We will take out the adenoids through his or her mouth and then stop the bleeding before he or she is woken up.

Before your operation

Arrange for a week off school. Let us know if your child has a sore throat or a cold in the week before their operation – it may be safer to put it off for a few weeks.

How long will my child be in hospital?

In some hospitals, adenoid surgery is done as a day case, so that he or she can go home on the same day as the operation. Some surgeons may prefer to keep children in hospital for one night. Either way, we will only let him or her go home when he or she is eating and drinking and feels well enough.

Most children need about a week off nursery or school. They should rest at home away from crowds and smoky places. Stay away from people with coughs and colds.

Q. Can there be problems?

A. Adenoid surgery is very safe, but every operation has a small risk. The most serious problem is bleeding, which may need a second operation to stop it. However, bleeding does not happen often. Please let us know before surgery if anyone in the family has a bleeding problem.

During the operation, there is a very small chance that we may chip or knock out a tooth, especially if it is loose, capped or crowned. Please let us know if your child has any teeth like this.

Some children feel sick after the operation. This settles quickly.

A small number of children find that their voice sounds different after the surgery. It may sound like they are talking through their nose a little. This settles quickly (by itself most of the time).

Your child's nose may seem blocked up after the surgery, but it will clear by itself in a few days.

Your child's throat may be a little sore

Give your child painkillers as needed for the first few days. Do not use more than it says on the label. Do not give your child aspirin – it could make your child bleed.

Prepare normal food. Eating food will help your child's throat to heal. Chewing gum may also help the pain.

Your child may have sore ears

This is normal. It happens because your throat and ears have the same nerves. It does not mean that your child has an ear infection.

Bleeding can be serious

If you see any bleeding from your child's throat or nose you must see a doctor. Either call your GP, call the ward or go to your nearest hospital casualty department.