Adenoids, General Information

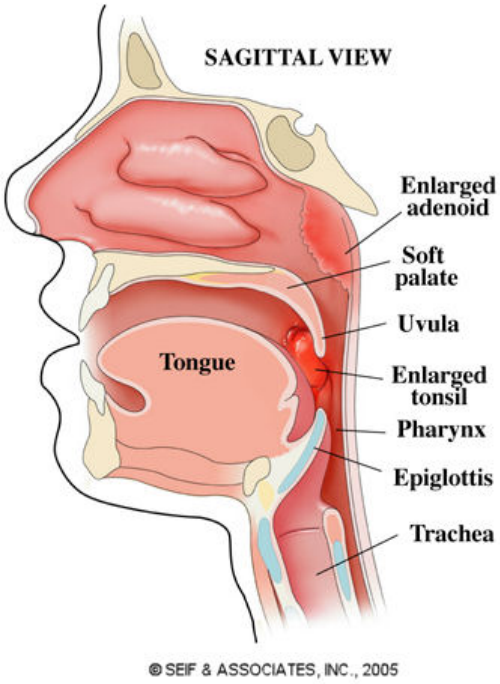
The adenoids are lymphoid tissue in the back of the nose. They are lymphoid tissue, the same as tonsils. When adenoids become enlarged, they may cause mouth breathing, snoring, bad breath, and runny nose. More serious complications of enlarged adenoids are: pulmonary hypertension, sleep apnea, and right-sided heart failure. Pulmonary hypertension is high blood pressure in the vessels leading to the lungs. Right-sided heart failure is the failure of the side of the heart which pumps blood to the lungs. Early treatment of throat infections may help prevent the adenoids from becoming enlarged. When they become enlarged, surgery can help. If your child is nearing the teen-age years, the adenoids normally shrink in adolescence so surgery may be avoided. Adults very seldom need an adenoidectomy.

SYMPTOMS

- Dry cracked lips and mouth.
- Restlessness while sleeping.
- Snoring and sleep apnea.
- Mouth breathing (mostly at night and during the day with severe obstruction).
- Bad breath.
- Frequent ear infections.
- Persistent runny nose or nasal congestion.
- Enlarged tonsils are usually present.

DIAGNOSIS

- Your caregiver is often able to tell this by an exam including looking at your tonsils and with a special mirror, looking directly at your adenoids.
- Occasionally, an X-ray with a side view of the throat may be done.
- Sleep studies may be done if there are signs of sleep apnea.



Adenoidectomy may be recommended when your child has:

- Trouble breathing through the nose.
- Excessive snoring
- Repeated or longstanding ear infections which:
  - Interfere with education.
  - Persistent problems despite antibiotic treatment.
  - Problems that recur 5 or more times in a year.
  - Problems that recur 3 or more times a year during a 2 year period.
- Episodes of sleep *apnea* (not breathing during sleep).

An adenoidectomy may be recommended if your child has longstanding or recurring bouts of tonsillitis or has enlarged adenoids that are causing airway blockage.

TREATMENT

- Antibiotics may be used to treat tonsil, adenoid, and sinus infections when they occur.

Adenoidectomy will prevent:

- Complications of long-term airway obstruction from enlarged adenoids.
- Complications of enlarged adenoids
- Breathing difficulties: Children have less trouble breathing through the nose. They may also have less and more mild sore throats and ear infections.

Adenoidectomy is usually done as an outpatient procedure. Recovery generally takes 1 to 2 weeks. Your child may have a stuffy nose, nasal drainage, and a sore throat during this time. Soft, cool foods and drinks may help relieve the discomfort.

RISKS OF PROCEDURE

Anesthesia risks include medication reactions and breathing problems. Surgical risks include bleeding and infection, the same as with most other surgeries. The overall prognosis for surgery is excellent.

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