

# Tonsil and Adenoid Removal (Tonsillectomy and Adenoidectomy)

## What is a tonsillectomy and adenoidectomy?

A tonsillectomy and adenoidectomy (T&A) is surgery that is done to remove the tonsils and adenoids.

- You have 2 tonsils, one on each side of the back of the throat. They look like reddish, oval-shaped masses and are easy to see.
- The adenoids are high in the throat behind the nose and the roof of the mouth and cannot be seen without special equipment.

The tonsils and adenoids help the body fight infections, like colds. However, the body's ability to fight infection doesn't change if they are removed. Removal of the tonsils can help prevent infection of the tonsils. The surgery may also help breathing or swallowing problems.

## When is it used?

Reasons for removing the tonsils or adenoids are:

- Trouble breathing, especially at night because of enlarged tonsils or adenoids
- Frequent infections of the tonsils
- An abscess (a build-up of pus) around one or both tonsils
- Trouble swallowing because of enlarged tonsils
- Possible cancer of the tonsils

Ask your healthcare provider about your choices for treatment and the risks.

## How do I prepare for this procedure?

- Make plans for your care and recovery after you have the procedure. Find someone to give you a ride home after the procedure. Allow for time to rest and try to find other people to help with your day-to-day tasks while you recover.
- Follow your provider's instructions about not smoking before and after the procedure. Smokers may have more breathing problems during the procedure and heal more slowly. It is best to quit 6 to 8 weeks before surgery.
- You may or may not need to take your regular medicines the day of the procedure, depending on what they are and when you need to take them. Some medicines (like aspirin) may increase your risk of bleeding during or after the procedure. Tell your healthcare provider about all medicines and supplements that you take. Ask your healthcare provider if you need to avoid taking any medicine or supplements before the procedure.
- Your provider will tell you when to stop eating and drinking before the procedure. This helps to keep you from vomiting during the procedure.
- Follow any other instructions your healthcare provider gives you.

- Ask any questions you have before the procedure. You should understand what your healthcare provider is going to do. You have the right to make decisions about your healthcare and to give permission for any tests or procedures.

## **What happens during the procedure?**

This procedure is usually done at an outpatient surgery center or at the hospital.

You will be given a general anesthetic to keep you from feeling pain. General anesthesia relaxes your muscles and you will be asleep.

Your healthcare provider will use a device to keep your mouth open during the procedure. Then your provider will remove the tonsils and/or adenoids from the surrounding tissues. Your provider may use stitches, a burning tool (cautery), a laser, or radio waves to help stop any bleeding.

The surgery usually takes about 1 hour.

## **What happens after the procedure?**

You may go home the same day as your surgery, or you may stay overnight in the hospital.

The device used to keep your mouth open during the operation may cause some temporary numbness or soreness in your tongue.

You will have a sore throat and be uncomfortable for about 7 to 10 days. It will hurt to swallow. Spend this time at home and limit your activity for at least 2 weeks.

As your throat heals and the scabs come off, your throat may bleed. If this happens, spit the blood out. Swallowing the blood may make you vomit, which can cause more damage to your throat after surgery.

There may be some change in your voice due to the removal of your tonsils and adenoids. This is normal. Your voice may not go back to the way it was before the surgery.

Follow your healthcare provider's instructions. Ask your provider:

- How long it will take to recover
- What activities you should avoid and when you can return to your normal activities
- How to take care of yourself at home
- What symptoms or problems you should watch for and what to do if you have them

Make sure you know when you should come back for a checkup.

## What are the risks of this procedure?

Every procedure or treatment has risks. Some possible risks of this procedure include:

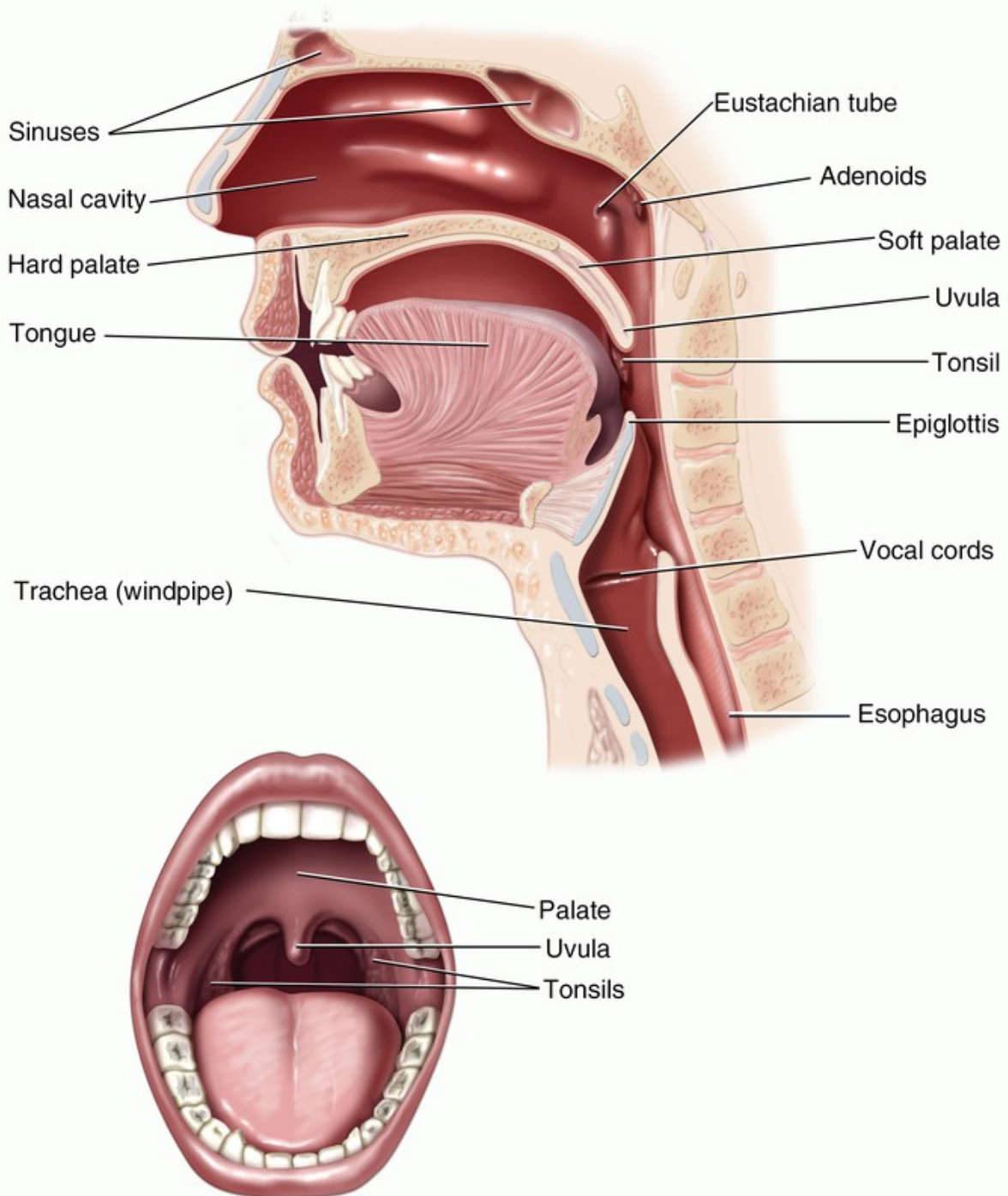
- You may have problems with anesthesia.
- Your body may not get enough fluids if you are unable to swallow.
- You may have infection or bleeding. You might need more treatment, possibly surgery, to stop bleeding.
- If there was cancer, not all of the cancer may be removed. The cancer may grow back.

Ask your healthcare provider how the risks apply to you. Be sure to discuss any other questions or concerns that you may have.

Developed by RelayHealth.

*This content is reviewed periodically and is subject to change as new health information becomes available. The information is intended to inform and educate and is not a replacement for medical evaluation, advice, diagnosis or treatment by a healthcare professional.*

# Head and Throat



Copyright ©2014 McKesson Corporation and/or one of its subsidiaries. All rights reserved.