

Adenoid surgery

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- 01392 402093 (for Mid Devon, East Devon and Exeter services)
- 01271 314090 (for North Devon services)
- rduh.pals@nhs.net

What are the adenoids?

Adenoids are small glands at the very back of the nose. They fight germs in younger children, but your body can still fight infection without your adenoids. We only take them out if they are doing more harm than good.

Why take them out?

Sometimes adenoids are so large they block the nasal airway, causing mouth-breathing or snoring. Some children even stop breathing for a few seconds while they are asleep. Adenoids can also cause ear problems because they sit just at the entrance of the tube that links the middle ear to the back of the nose. Removing the adenoids at the same time as putting grommets in the ears can help stop the glue ear coming back.

What are the alternatives to having the adenoids removed?

Your adenoids get smaller as you grow older, so you may find that nose and ear problems get better with time. Surgery will make these problems get better more quickly, but all surgery carries a small risk. You should discuss with your surgeon whether to wait and see, or have surgery now. For some children, using a steroid nasal spray will help reduce congestion in the nose and adenoids, and may be helpful to try before deciding on surgery.

Antibiotics are often not helpful and may only give temporary relief from infected nasal discharge. They have side effects and may promote 'superbugs' that are resistant to antibiotics.

You may change your mind about the operation at any time, and signing a consent form does not mean that your child has to have the operation. If you would like to have a second opinion about the treatment, you can ask your specialist. He or she will not mind arranging this for you. You may wish to ask your own GP to arrange a second opinion with another specialist. 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.

The operation

Your child will be asleep for the operation. We will take out the adenoids, typically through his or her mouth, and then stop the bleeding before he or she is woken up. Adenoid surgery is usually done as a day case, so that your child can go home on the same day as the operation.

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

Possible complications

Adenoid surgery is safe, but every operation has small risks. The most serious problem is bleeding, which may need a second operation to stop it. However, bleeding after adenoid removal is very uncommon. It is very important to let us know well before the operation 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. Very rarely indeed, food, fluid or speech can escape through the nose after the surgery. If this happens at all it is most likely to be temporary. Cases of permanent such issues are, however, possible.

Post-op care

Your child's nose may seem blocked up after the surgery, but it will clear by itself in a week or so. Your child's throat may be a little sore. 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 your child has an ear infection.

Give painkillers, typically paracetamol and ibuprofen are recommended, 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. (Aspirin is not safe to give to children under the age of 16 years at any time, unless prescribed by a doctor).

Bleeding can be serious

If you see any bleeding from your child's throat or nose, you must see a doctor without delay. Either call your GP, call the ward, or go to your nearest hospital emergency department.

Your notes

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern, please contact PALS:

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