

# Handy Handouts®

Free informational handouts for educators, parents, and students

## Tonsils and Adenoids

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Use a mirror to look in your mouth and at the back of your throat, you will see your uvula (hanging down from the roof of your mouth) in the middle and round masses on each side of the uvula. These sphere-shaped masses are your tonsils. If you have a hard time seeing them in your own mouth, you can also see them in another child or adult by looking into his or her mouth. Your tonsils have a very important job to produce antibodies that help fight nose and throat infections and to keep these infections from spreading to the neck or into the bloodstream. Your adenoids, unlike your tonsils, are not visible by opening your mouth; they are a mass of tissue located where your nasal passageway and your throat meet. They also play a role in helping your immune system fight off germs.

When tonsils and adenoids get infected, they become enlarged or swollen and inflamed and can cause several other problems in the body, including:



- **Speech:** Having a sore throat can make speaking painful and can change the tone and quality of your voice. If your tonsils are swollen and enlarged, your voice may sound hoarse or muffled; it may also be difficult to produce some sounds because the tongue is pushed forward. If your adenoids are enlarged, you may sound hyponasal, like you are plugging your nose (essentially, the swollen adenoid is plugging your nasal passageway).



- **Breathing:** Enlarged tonsils and adenoids can constrict the airway, making it difficult to breathe and can cause mouth breathing. This restricted airway can also cause snoring and obstructed sleep apnea while asleep.



- **Ear Infections:** Enlarged tonsils and adenoids can prevent fluid from draining from the middle ear, causing frequent ear infections, which can cause speech delays in young children.

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If you have any of the signs or symptoms of enlarged tonsils and adenoids mentioned above, consult with your physician to determine appropriate treatments. These could include antibiotics to reduce infection, a tonsillectomy/adenoidectomy (removal of the tonsils and/or adenoids), or speech therapy to strengthen areas affected by prolonged enlarged tonsils and adenoids. It should be noted that speech therapy is NOT effective while the areas are swollen and infected, but may help rehabilitate healthy communication in children who have adjusted to swollen tissues in the throat over long periods of time.



#### Resources:

"Toddler Speech Problems," Babble, accessed July 12, 2017. <https://www.babble.com/toddler/toddler-speech-problems/>

"Tonsils and Adenoids – How Do They Impact Speech," Speech Buddies, accessed July 11, 2017, <https://www.speechbuddy.com/blog/language-development/tonsils-and-adenoidshow-do-they-impact-speech/>

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