

Tonsillitis and Adenoiditis

The tonsils and adenoids are lymph tissues in the throat that help produce antibodies to fight infection. The tonsils are located on both sides of the throat at the back of the mouth, and the adenoids are higher in the throat. Children often experience inflammation, or swelling, of the tonsils. This is called tonsillitis. When the adenoids are inflamed or swell, the condition is called adenoiditis.

Tonsillitis and adenoiditis may be caused by either a virus or a strep throat infection. Symptoms include a sore throat, fever, pain upon swallowing, swollen glands, and bright, red tonsils spotted with pus. Chronic adenoid enlargement may also cause blockage of nose breathing, since the adenoids sit just behind the rear openings of the nose into the throat. Adenoid enlargement may also cause blockage of the eustachian tubes. The eustachian tubes connect the middle ear to the throat and open in the throat near the adenoids. When the eustachian tubes are blocked, any fluid that ordinarily run down the tubes from the middle ear to the throat becomes blocked and builds up in the middle ear. Bacteria or viruses can then grow in the fluid and cause an ear infection.

What treatment is recommended for tonsillitis and adenoiditis?

While it used to be common to remove the tonsils and adenoids during childhood, it is now thought that these lymph tissues help fight infections and should be removed only for chronic or extreme cases of tonsillitis or adenoiditis.

Tonsillitis and adenoids can generally be treated like any other sore throat by following these four steps:

1. Gargle with warm water that has a teaspoon of salt dissolved in every glass.
2. Drink plenty of fluids. Try honey and lemon in warm water or weak tea.
3. Take acetaminophen or ibuprofen to reduce pain and fever. However, children and teenagers should **never** use aspirin or medications containing or related to aspirin without first consulting a doctor.
4. To relieve a sore throat, try over-the-counter throat lozenges or cough drops.

When to call Kaiser Permanente:

Call your doctor or other health care professional if a sore throat is accompanied by two of the following three signs of strep throat:

1. a fever of 101 degrees or higher
2. swollen neck glands
3. white or yellow coating on the tonsils.

Consult with your doctor if your child has more than four or five bouts of tonsillitis or adenoiditis during a year, or if he/she has persistent snoring, mouth breathing, or a nasal or muffled voice.

* * * * *

Use these Kaiser Permanente resources for reliable health information:

- ❖ Connect to our Web site at members.kp.org to access health and drug encyclopedias, interactive programs, message boards, health classes, and much more.
- ❖ Check your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*.
- ❖ Contact your Kaiser Permanente Health Education Department or Center.
- ❖ Listen to recorded messages on the Kaiser Permanente Healthphone (1-800-332-7563; TTY: 1-800-777-9059). Request a *Healthphone Directory* from Health Education or download a copy at members.kp.org. (Search “Healthphone”.)

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor. If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist.