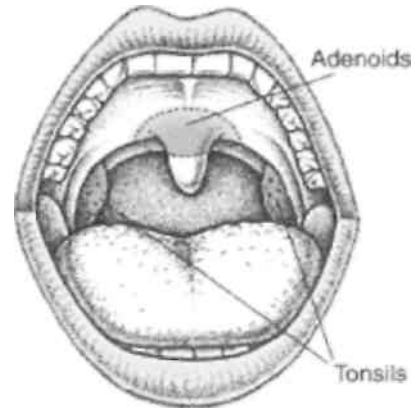


Tonsils and Adenoids

Where are the tonsils and adenoids?

The two **tonsils** (palatine tonsils) are located in the back wall of the throat on the left and right side on either side of the uvula (the teardrop-shaped tissue that hangs down the middle of the throat). If you look in the mirror and stick your tongue out you may be able to see your tonsils. The adenoids cannot be seen easily because they are located behind the nose (nasopharynx) or the upper part of the throat.



What functions do the tonsils and adenoids serve? Are they important?

Tonsils and adenoids are both composed of the same type of tissue called lymphoid **tissue**. Lymphoid tissue helps in the immune system by producing and processing antibodies. Numerous studies have looked at the effect of removing tonsils and adenoids on the immune system. Because lymphoid tissue is found throughout the body, removal of the tonsils and adenoids does not have a noticeable effect. It appears that in many cases tonsils and adenoids may become "dysfunctional" or "overreact" to our society's infections and may be more of a liability than an asset.

Why would my tonsils and or adenoids need to be removed?

For the majority of cases tonsils and/or adenoids are removed for two reasons: recurrent infections (especially for "Strep Throat") or because they are too large and block breathing at night.

If medical management, such as antibiotics, cannot get rid of a tonsil/adenoid infection or if one repeatedly has tonsil/adenoid infections, a tonsillectomy and/or adenoidectomy is indicated. Although less common, tonsils and particularly adenoids may harbor an infection that may result in spread into the ears (otitis media) or sinuses (sinusitis) causing repeated infections.