



Greenville Ear, Nose & Throat

Uvulopalatopharyngoplasty (UPPP)

Uvulopalatopharyngoplasty (UPPP) is a surgical procedure that improves certain symptoms of obstructive sleep apnea and snoring. Obstructive sleep apnea is a condition where the airway becomes blocked during sleep. Patients may struggle to breathe and usually wake up to overcome the blockage. People with severe obstructive sleep apnea may repeat this process every few minutes of their sleep cycle, sometimes waking 100 or more times an hour!

In a UPPP, the lower part of the soft palate (including the uvula) is trimmed. The surgeon then stitches together the remaining edges to reduce the amount of palatal tissue. Patients end up with an “upside-down U” of stitches in the back of their throat.

The operation takes about an hour. A tonsillectomy often is performed at the same time to further open the airway.

Most patients stay overnight in the hospital’s intensive care unit after surgery. That’s because they need to be monitored for 23 hours to make sure no excessive bleeding or swelling occurs. If the first day after surgery goes well, patients can return home the next day.

Recovery varies, but most patients do well with little prescription pain medication. Pain often is at its worst on the third day after surgery (when the inflammatory response reaches its peak).

Some patients experience pain in the ears afterward. That’s because the surgery site is so high in the back of the throat that pain feels as if it were coming from the ears.

Usually, blood streaking in the saliva occurs, which peaks at about 7-10 days when the scab sloughs off from the site.

After a UPPP, patients will have a very sore throat for 10-14 days. Most people will need to take time off from work for at least two weeks.

Note: Most insurance companies require prior written determination that a UPPP is medically needed. The CPT code for this procedure is 42145. You may want to contact your insurance company to start the authorization process. Many insurance plans take at least 30 days to complete a review for this procedure.