

Care Instructions After Ear Tube Surgery

What is the purpose of ear tube surgery?

Ear tube (or pressure equalization tube) placement surgery is a procedure to implant synthetic ear tubes into the ear drum. We may place tubes in one or both ears.

- Standard tubes, commonly used in children, last 6-24 months and usually fall out of the ear drum and ear on their own.
- Long-term tubes, typically used in people with chronic ear problems, are shaped like a T to stay in place longer. After the ear tubes have been in place for 3 years, a surgeon will need to remove them.

What can I expect after my child's ear tube surgery?

- Ear tube placement is generally less painful than an ear infection. If your child experiences discomfort, you may give them acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Motrin®) as needed.
- Your child may have draining fluid, which is sometimes bloody, for several days after surgery.
- Start using antibiotic ear drops the evening after your child's surgery. Use 3 drops twice a day for 3 days.
 - If the drops seem to be bothering your child, try warming them by carrying the bottle in your pocket for about 30 minutes before giving them the drops.
 - When giving drops, puddle the drops above the ear canal (the opening to the inner ear). Then massage the skin and cartilage in front of the ear canal for 5-10 seconds to help pump the drops into the ear canal.

We will send a prescription for antibiotic ear drops (often eye drops for use in the ears) to your pharmacy. Fill this prescription so you have drops ready to use after surgery if you need them.

What activities can my child do with ear tubes?

- You may choose to have your child wear ear plugs (with or without a headband) when they swim in lake or ocean water. They don't need to wear ear plugs during bathing or when swimming in a chlorinated pool, but they may be helpful if your child's ears are sensitive to water.
 - After your child swims in lake or ocean water, use ear drops once at the end of the day (put 3-4 drops into both ears).
- Tell your child to avoid diving into water. It may cause pain and pressure.
- It is okay for your child to travel by air (fly in an airplane), and they may help decrease pain with the pressure changes.

How do I treat drainage from an ear infection?

- If your child's ear gets draining fluid (drainage) which is cloudy, milky, discolored, smells bad, this is a sign of an ear infection. Treat the ear infection with ear drops. Put 3-4 drops into the ear or ears that have drainage twice a day for 7 days.
- If they still have drainage after 5 days of using the drops, call the office.
- If they have a fever of 101.5° F or higher and other symptoms of illness along with drainage, please call your child's pediatrician.

What follow-up can I expect after my child's ear tube surgery?

We will schedule a follow-up appointment 3-6 months after your child's surgery to check on their hearing and ears.

What is the contact information?

- Please contact the clinic nurse by calling (734) 936-5730. You can also use this number for scheduling appointments.
- On weekends or after 5:00 PM, call (734) 936-6267 and ask for the resident Otolaryngology doctor on call.

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