



Adult and Pediatric Otolaryngology
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Adult Tympanostomy (In-Office Ear Tube Procedure)

Your surgeon has recommended a tympanostomy. This procedure will be performed in office with local anesthesia. During the procedure, the ENT surgeon removes any fluid from the middle ear and places a small tube in the eardrum. The tube allows for ventilation and equalization of pressure between the outer ear canal and the middle ear. The equalization of pressure on both sides of the eardrum prevents the fluid/pressure from reoccurring.

In most cases, surgery can be done on both ears in less than 10 minutes.

The Procedure:

Making a Slit

Once under anesthesia (either local or general, depending on which is chosen for you), the ear canal is cleaned under an operating microscope. Again, using the microscope and special surgical instruments, the ENT surgeon makes a small incision in the eardrum (tympanostomy).

Removing any Fluid

A very small suction instrument is passed into the ear to the level of the eardrum. Using gentle suction, any present fluid is withdrawn through the suction instrument, as needed.

Putting in the Tube

After fluid is removed, the surgeon inserts a small tube into the same incision in the eardrum. The shape of the tube keeps the tube in place 12-18 months on average. The tubes usually come out on their own and are seen and removed in the office under the microscope.

Occasionally, a person that has to undergo more than 2 or 3 sets of vent tubes will require a special tube to be placed through the eardrum that will stay in the ear longer than 12-18 months.

Post-Operative Instructions:

You will be able to go about your day directly after the procedure with no limitations.

Minimal pain is encountered.

CALL THE DOCTOR IF:

1. The ear bleeds heavily or keeps bleeding after the first 48 hours.
2. Sticky or discolored fluid drains out of the ear after the first 48 hours.
3. You have a high fever that does not respond to over-the-counter fever medication.
4. You are dizzy, confused, extremely drowsy, or have a change in mental state.

In this case, antibiotic eardrops will be prescribed. You should use 5 drops on each ear twice a day for 5 days after the tubes are placed.

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After Tympanostomy (Ear Tubes)

Your hearing should improve once the tubes are in place. You will be given an appointment to see the surgeon within 3-4 weeks after placement of the ear tubes.

When you return to the office, the surgeon will examine both ears to determine if the tubes are in place and healing is occurring.

You will be followed by the surgeon every 6 months. It is important to keep these appointments. The postop visits are the only way to make sure the tubes remain in place and stay open.

Even with the tubes in place, you may still experience drainage. Drainage from the ear indicates that the tube is open and functioning.

If drainage and infection does occur, treatment will include antibiotic eardrops and possibly irrigation with peroxide and distilled water. Our office will give instructions on irrigating at home, as needed.

Oral antibiotics are only given if you are experiencing an elevated temperature over 101 °F.

Ear Care

It is highly recommended to keep water out of the ears while PE tubes are in place. This includes avoidance of bath water, swimming pool, river, and lake water. If water enters the ear, there is a risk of the water going through the tube and into the middle ear space. This will cause mild to severe pain. Water of any kind may contain contaminants, which can cause an infection if it enters the tube.

For those that cannot avoid water, swimplugs are highly recommended for every interaction with water.

Please do not hesitate to call our office if you have any questions!

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