



Adult and Pediatric Otolaryngology
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Pediatric Tympanostomy (Ear Tube Procedure)

During surgery, the ENT surgeon removes the fluid from your child's 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 from reoccurring.

In most cases, surgery can be done on both ears in less than 10 minutes. If your child is a mouth breather and snorer, a removal of the adenoids may be considered. This takes at least an additional 10 minutes. The ENT surgeon will discuss this with you prior to the procedure.

Making a Slit

Once your child is under anesthesia with a face mask, 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 Using gentle suction, the fluid is withdrawn through the suction instrument.

Putting in the Tube

After the 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 child 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.

Right after Surgery

After the surgery is completed, your child will be taken to the recovery area. Once fully awake, parents will be called into the secondary recovery room, and shortly thereafter, you should be able to take your child home.

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. Your child has a high fever that does not respond to Tylenol or Children's Motrin.
4. Your child is dizzy, confused, extremely drowsy, or has 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 child's hearing should improve once the tubes are in place. Your child will be given an appointment to see the surgeon within 3-4 weeks after placement of the ear tubes.

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

Your child will be followed by the surgeon every 6 months. Do your best to keep the visits. The postop visits are the only way to make sure the tubes remain in place and stay open.

Fewer Problems

Even with the tubes in place, your child may still experience drainage. Studies have indicated that drainage occurs in 50% of children with vent tubes. This is usually associated with an upper respiratory tract infection and yellow-green nasal 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 you instructions on irrigating at home, as needed.

Oral antibiotics are only given if the child is 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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