

What is a tympanostomy and what is the function of the tubes?

Tympanostomy is a small incision in the eardrum to allow for drainage of fluid from the middle ear. The middle ear is located behind the eardrum. The tubes keep the incision in the eardrum open allowing air to ventilate the middle ear.

Why is a tympanostomy necessary?

Usually for one of the following reasons:

1. To drain the middle ear fluid that has not responded to antibiotic therapy or which has not cleared up over time.
2. To help prevent repeated ear infections despite antibiotic therapy.
3. To treat a severe ear infection that has not responded to antibiotics.

What are the risks of tubes?

A few children will still get frequent ear infections even after tubes are in place. There is a small risk that the eardrum will not heal after the tubes come out. If this residual perforation does not eventually heal, it may need to be patched.

What to expect the day of surgery?

Your child should not eat or drink anything before the scheduled surgery. The exact time will be discussed with you by your surgery coordinator and this is usually based on the age of the child. Your child will be given a general anesthetic via a mask. The anesthetic will make your child sleep during the procedure. The procedure usually lasts about 20 minutes. Upon completion of the surgery, your child will be moved to the recovery area. He or she will be monitored by a nurse until they wake up and this usually is no less than one hour depending on how the child responds to surgery.

Some children may be groggy, irritable, nauseated and/or appear disoriented. These are all normal side effects of general anesthesia and usually subside within a short period after surgery.

Important information following surgery:

1. **Pain Control:** Use Tylenol or Motrin to relieve any discomfort following surgery. Generic forms of Acetaminophen and Ibuprofen are acceptable.
2. **Ear Drops:** Use prescribed ear drops as directed by your surgeon. Then store the bottle in a safe place for future use.
3. **Activities:** School/regular activities may be resumed the day after surgery.
4. **Bleeding/Drainage:** A small amount of blood and/or pus may drain from the ears after surgery and is normal for the first few days. **Please call the office if drainage last longer that 3-4 days.**

Tympanostomy and Tube Insertion

5. **Cleaning:** You can clean drainage and/or old blood from your child's outer ear only with a cotton-tip applicator, moistened with equal parts water and hydrogen peroxide.
6. **Ear plugs:** We do "fit" your child with the correct size. Fitting can be done prior to or after surgery. Two options of earplugs: 1) pro-plugs are available for purchase, 2) custom fit ear plugs are available. Please inquire on the cost of each pair of earplugs.
7. **Swimming:** Most children will not develop ear infections as a result of surface swimming in chemically treated pools. However, it is important to make sure the ear is as dry as possible after being in the pool. We do not recommend diving or deep water swimming with tubes in place. **Do not use "swimmers ear drops" with alcohol.** Swimming should be discontinued when your child has an active draining ear infection after tube placement.
8. **Bathing:** Please be careful to avoid allowing soap or soapy water to get in the ear. This may be difficult for children with longer hair and ear plug usage may become necessary. A temporary ear plug can be fashioned from a cotton ball coated with Vaseline (for bath-time usage only.)
9. **Travel:** Air travel is permitted after surgery.

If you have any questions and/or concerns, please call our office at 210-733-4368.



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