



Ear Tube Post-Op Instructions

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What to expect after surgery?

The procedure to place ear tubes takes about 10-15 minutes and your surgeon will talk with you as soon as the surgery is over. At that time, you will receive a prescription for antibiotic ear drops. Your surgeon will also discuss any relevant findings and specific instructions for the post-op period. Use the information below as a guide for the weeks after surgery. If you have any questions, please call our office.

Can my child go home after surgery?

Children almost always go home the same day as surgery after spending a short time in the recovery unit.

How bad will it hurt?

Ear tubes do not tend to be very painful. Most children will not even know they are there. Your child may have some initial discomfort or pull at their ears. This is temporary and usually not a sign of infection. If you think your child is in pain, it is okay to use Tylenol or Motrin. Use the dosage recommended for your child's age and weight on the bottle.

When can my child return to daycare?

Usually your child will be back to normal by the next day. They can return to all normal activities, a normal diet and can go back to school or daycare.

Can my child swim with ear tubes?

Most ENT surgeons have found that patients do not need to be overly concerned about water getting in the ears. This includes swimming on the surface of a chlorinated pool or playing in the bathtub. For children who love to go underwater more than 18 inches, you may consider trying some ear plugs to reduce the amount of water that enters the ear.

What are some reasons I should contact the doctor?

1. Nausea, vomiting and fatigue may occur a few hours after surgery. If this lasts more than 12 hours, you should contact your doctor.
2. Drainage of fluid from the ear is common for two to three days after surgery. This fluid can be clear, pinkish or even bloody. If the drainage lasts beyond three days, you should contact your doctor.
3. Some fussiness or a low grade fever may be noted after surgery. If this fever persists or goes higher than 102.5 F, please contact your doctor.

4. Ear tubes will help prevent future ear infections but 25 percent of children (35 percent of children in daycare) with ear tubes will still get the occasional infection. Drainage from the ear will usually indicate an infection and they will need to be evaluated.

What else do I need to know?

1. Ear tubes usually stay in the ear for 6-12 months. However, every child is different and the tubes may come out very quickly or may last for a few years. As the eardrum grows, the tubes are gradually pushed out. The residual hole in the eardrum usually closes within a few weeks after the tube falls out. While uncommon, there is a chance your ENT surgeon may have to remove the tubes.
2. A small number of children will have problems with the tubes. These are almost always minor in nature and include persistent infections, plugging of the tubes, tubes falling out early and a persistent hole in the eardrum after a tube falls out.
3. If your child had a conductive hearing loss before surgery, normal sounds may seem loud due to the immediate improvement in hearing after the tubes.
4. There is a 20-30 percent chance your child will need more than one set of ear tubes. In those cases, adenoidectomy may also be recommended.
5. Plan on making a follow-up appointment two to four weeks after surgery. A follow-up hearing test is typically recommended. In addition, we will need to see your child every six months as long as the tubes remain in place.