



COMMUNITY



Ear, Nose, Throat, and Allergy

Ear Tube Surgery

What are ear tubes?

Ear tubes are known by many names, including tympanostomy tubes, ear ventilation tubes, or most often, PE (pressure-equalizing) tubes. The tiny hollow tubes are made of soft plastic and are often shaped like small sewing bobbins. These tubes are placed in your child's eardrums and reduce the number of ear infections by letting air into the middle ear while draining fluid out. Keeping this fluid out of the middle ear can help bring back normal hearing.

What happens during surgery?

PE tubes are put in during outpatient surgery. Your child does not have to stay overnight in the hospital. Your child will have general anesthesia and will be asleep through the surgery. Using a microscope, the ear surgeon makes a small cut in the eardrum. Any fluid in the middle ear is removed. The tube is put in the eardrum hole and stays in place without any stitches. Most tubes spontaneously extrude from the eardrum on their own. Surgery on both eardrums usually takes less than 20 minutes. Recovery from anesthesia is rapid and your child will be able to go home in about 1 hour.

When will my child's hearing improve?

Many children can hear better right away after the ear tubes have been put in. The child may be frightened by normal noises that now seem loud. This will go away as soon as your child gets used to hearing normal sound volumes.

How can I take care of my child?

1. **Pain Medicine.** Most children are back to normal a few hours after surgery and don't have any pain. If your child is fussy or runs a fever after surgery, give acetaminophen every 4 hours according to the directions for your child's age.
2. **Diet.** Your child may feel sick to his stomach or throw up right away after surgery. First give your child cool, clear liquid to drink. As your child feels like eating, slowly return to a normal diet.
3. **Ear Drainage after Surgery.** Because of an opening in the eardrum that has been made, you **might** see drainage from the middle ear for 2 or 3 days after the operation. The drainage may be clear, pink, or bloody. The doctor may give you some medicine drops for this. Your child's medicine is _____ . Put 5 drops in each ear 2 times a day for 3 days. The drops may sting a little for some children. If the stinging makes your child too uncomfortable, you may stop the drops.
4. **Protection from Water.** For most children & adults with tubes, it is not necessary to protect your ears from clean water such as chlorinated pool water, bath or shower water. Ears with tubes should be protected from pond, lake, river, and ocean water. Often there won't be a problem if water does get in the ears, but these types of water can carry germs into the middle ear through the tube and cause an ear infection. Vaseline coated cotton balls, silicone ear putty, or specially made ear molds can be placed in the outer ear to block the ear canal. **Silly Putty should not be used because pieces can be left in the ear canal.** Either ear putty or ear molds should be used when swimming. Diving deeper than a few feet under water should be avoided.

5. **Ear Infections.** PE tubes will help stop ear infections most of the time. However, an ear infection can still occur. Drainage from the ear usually indicates an ear infection in a person with tubes. You should call the office if your child ever has ear pain, fullness in the ears, hearing problems, or drainage of blood from the ears (except just after surgery). Often the nurse can tell over the phone if the child can be treated at home with medication by mouth or ear drops, or if the child needs to be seen in the office. You can decrease the chance that your child will have an ear infection if you:
 - Feed your child in a sitting up position
 - Do not let your child go to bed with a bottle
 - Avoid having your child around anyone who is smoking.
6. **Tube Removal.** PE Tubes do not need to be surgically removed in most cases. PE tubes are slowly pushed out of the eardrums and fall out of the ear. This usually happens 6 to 14 months after surgery. Occasionally (3% of ears) a small hole is left behind after the tube falls out. This can be easily repaired in most cases. Some children (25%) will need a second set of PE tubes put in.
7. **Other Medicines**
For pain or fever over 102°F (39°C) give

8. **Additional Instructions**

9. **Follow-up Appointment After Discharge**
Your child needs to be rechecked and has an appointment on _____
@ _____ o'clock with _____.

Call your ENT If:

- Your child's vomiting lasts more than 24 hours or has signs of dehydration.
- The pain is not helped by pain medication.
- Ear drainage lasts longer than 3 days.

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