



Eustachian Tube (ET) Dilation

The ET connects the middle ear to the back of the nose and throat. It opens periodically to allow air to pass into the middle ear and equilibrate pressure with the outside world. In your case, it was not working well, and instead of repeated tubes in the eardrum, we elected to try this procedure.

ET dysfunction that does not respond to medications is currently treated by the placement of a ventilating tube (tubes) through the eardrum. Tympanostomy tubes do not correct the ET itself but do allow air into the middle ear in an attempt to limit further ear problems. They are usually effective as long as they remain open, but most tubes will eventually fall out of the ear or become clogged. If ear problems recur, a tube may be replaced.

The balloon dilation of the ET operation attempts to restore normal function to the ET with the goal of eliminating the need for prolonged ear ventilating tubes. This works similar to an angioplasty—the dilated balloon opens a blood vessel in the heart in the same way that it opens the ET.

Procedure Details

The balloon dilation operation is under general anesthesia. The Eustachian tube lies in the back of the nasal cavity (nasopharynx) and is viewed with an endoscope (surgical telescope) passed through one or the other nostril. A balloon dilation catheter is also inserted through the nose and passed into the opening of the Eustachian tube.

The catheter is inflated with saline within the ET to stretch it for two minutes and 12 ATM of pressure in a manner similar to its use in widening the openings to sinuses. The balloon is then deflated and removed.

As we discussed, the RISKS include but are not limited to sore throat (expected for a few days), bleeding from the ET, scarring or further obstruction of the ET, overcorrection resulting in a chronically open (patulous) ET causing echoing of one's own voice in the ear, and failure to improve.

POST-OP

Eustachian tube balloon dilation instructions: Recovery is quick, usually within a day or two. You may resume all regular medications.

Please contact our office at 478-743-8953 if you have any questions or concerns.