



Tympanostomy Tubes

Ear tubes help protect your child from ear infections, middle ear fluids (liquid behind the eardrum), and the hearing problems that can go along with them. Most tubes last about 6 to 18 months, allowing many children time to outgrow their ear problems. Most tubes fall out by themselves. The chance of a tube falling in instead of out is very rare. Tubes that do not come out after 3 or more years may need to be removed by your doctor.

Possible Complications of Ear Tubes

Complications of ear tubes are usually minor. Some children develop a white mark or patch on the eardrum, which is called sclerosis. It does not affect your child's hearing or future chance of ear infections. Some children develop a small depression or pocket in the eardrum at the tube site after it falls out. Again, this does not affect the hearing and rarely requires treatment. About 1-2 out of every 100 children will develop a small hole (perforation) of the eardrum after the tube falls out. The hole will often close on its own over time, but if it does not, it can be patched in the operating room.

Post-Operative Care

Most patients recover within 24 hours from surgery. Motrin or Tylenol can be used as needed. There is usually very little pain.

- Eardrops were prescribed today. You will use them in the ears **AFTER** surgery.

Ear Tube Follow-Up and Aftercare

Routine follow-up with your doctor every 4 to 6 months is important to make sure that your child's tubes are in place and to check for possible problems. All children need follow-up no matter how well they are doing. Children often feel well even when there is a problem with the tube. Once the tubes fall out, your child should return for a final recheck after 6 to 12 months so that your doctor can check the ears and be sure that fluid has not built up again and the hole has closed.

Ear Tubes and Water Precautions

Some children with ear tubes wear earplugs when swimming. The earplugs keep water out of the ear canal and out of the ear tube. However, water does not usually go through the tube during swimming. As a result, earplugs are not necessary for most children. Times that earplugs may be needed on an individual basis are when swimming in lakes or non-chlorinated pools, dunking the head in the bathtub, or experiencing pain when water enters the ear canal.

Ear Tubes and Ear Infections

Your child may still get an ear infection with a tube. If an infection occurs, you will usually notice drainage or a bad smell from the ear canal. This is normal and indicates the tube is working. Drainage can be clear, cloudy, or even bloody. The best treatment is antibiotic drops alone. Place drops in the canal 2 times a day for up to 10 days. If there is no improvement after 7 days, please call for an appointment.

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