

### **Tympanostomy Tubes ("ear tubes") in Children**

When medical therapy is ineffective, tympanostomy tubes (ear tubes) may be recommended for the treatment of ear fluid, recurrent ear infections, and hearing loss. The procedure is painlessly done while the child is asleep under general anesthesia, which is supervised by an anesthesiologist. Most of the time, the procedure is an outpatient procedure that takes about 15 minutes. A small incision is made in the eardrum, which allows insertion of the tube into the eardrum.

Tympanostomy tubes usually stay in place from 9-18 months and fall out as the eardrum regenerates. The tubes are not visible, and they are not felt by the child. Ear tubes reduce the severity and frequency of infections, fluid, and hearing loss, but cannot reverse the underlying reasons for the ear disease (young age, smoke exposure, allergies, etc). The ear tubes work by allowing drainage of fluid behind the eardrum and improving function of the middle ear (the cavity behind the eardrum). When the tubes are in place, it is not unusual for children to have drainage when they get "colds" or allergy symptoms.

Placement of ear tubes has few risks. When the tubes fall out, less than 5% of children will have a small hole in the eardrum (perforation) that could require additional surgical repair. About 1 out of 10 children develop drainage from the ear that requires antibiotic treatment. Most children only need tubes placed once, but about 15% may need multiple sets of tubes.

A follow up visit is important to check healing and hearing. Please call the office to make the first postoperative appointment for "ear tubes," which should be about 2- 3 weeks after the procedure.

#### Instructions after surgery

- It is not unusual to have ear drainage after surgery. Sometimes this drainage can be bloody, which can be a sign of inflammation. Ear drops (if prescribed) should be continued as directed and the cotton ball be changed as often as needed.
- Mild ear pain or pulling at the ears is normal , and may require treatment with Tylenol.
- Fever up to 101degrees Fahrenheit may sometimes occur and should be treated with Tylenol and plenty of fluids. If fever > 101 F persists, please call the office.
- Clear liquids (Sprite, water, Jello) are recommended for the first few hours after surgery, after which regular diet is usually OK.
- Normal activity (including daycare) can usually be resumed the day after surgery.
- Water should be kept out of the ears at least until the first visit. This can be done by placing a cottonball covered with Vaseline Petroleum jelly in the ear canal. If some water does enter the ear and cause pain, use Tylenol as needed. Avoid the use of Q-tips.
- The doctor will notify you if earplugs will be needed during swimming and other water exposure while the tubes are in place (usually they are not needed). However, dirty bathtub water and lake water should be kept out of the ear with ear plugs.

**If you have medical questions or concerns, please call 972-731-7654, and choose option 3 to speak to (or leave message) for the nurse. To expedite care, please note the patient's date of birth, spell the patients full name, and leave your name/relationship and best phone number. Thanks for choosing ENT Associates of Texas.**