

EAR TUBE SURGERY

Discharge Instructions

What are ear tubes?

Ear tubes are known by many names, including tympanostomy tubes, ear ventilating 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. The tubes do not cause hearing loss or long-term damage to the eardrum.

What happens during surgery?

PE tubes are put in during day 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. Surgery on both eardrums 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?

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 or ibuprofen every 4 hours according to the directions for your child's age.

1. **Diet.** Your child may feel sick to his stomach or throw up right after surgery. First give your child cool, clear liquids to drink. As your child feels like eating, slowly return to a normal diet.
2. **Ear Drainage after Surgery.** Because an opening in the eardrum has been made, you may see drainage from the middle ear for 2 to 3 days after the operation. The drainage may be clear pink, bloody, yellow or green. The doctor may give you some medicine drops for this. Use the drops with the directions on the prescription. These drops may sting a little for some children. If the stinging makes your child too uncomfortable, you may stop the drops.
3. **Protection from Water.** Keep the ears dry for 24 hours after surgery. After that, treated water is okay. Studies have now shown that water does not lead to an increased incidence of ear drainage. Therefore, ear plugs are not routinely recommended for bathing or shallow water swimming. Ear plugs are recommended for if the child is going to be swimming in a lake or pond, or if the child dives in water



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deeper than 6 feet. If the child develops recurrent ear drainage after water exposure, ear plugs may be recommended.

4. **Ear Infections.** PE tubes will help stop ear infections most of the time. However, an ear infection can still occur. You should call the office nurse if your child ever has ear pain, fullness in the ears, hearing problems, or drainage or 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 medicine 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
5. **Tube Removal.** PE tubes do not need to be surgically removed in most instances. PE tubes are slowly pushed out of the eardrums and fall out of the ear. This usually happens 6 to 12 months after surgery. Most children (85%) will not need a second set of PE tubes put in. By the time the tubes have fallen out, most children have outgrown the need for tubes.
6. **Other Medicines**
 - For pain or fever over 102°F (39°C) give Tylenol (Acetaminophen) or Motrin (Ibuprofen)

7. Follow Up

- Your follow up should be 2-3 weeks after surgery
- We will conduct a follow up hearing test (audiogram) at the time of the follow up appointment as well
- This appointment should have been made by your doctor's **Surgery Coordinator** at the time of scheduling the surgery. If you are unsure if you have a post operative appointment scheduled, please reach out to your doctor's **Surgery Coordinator** to verify your post operative appointment.

When should I be concerned enough to call the doctor's office:

- Your child's vomiting lasts more than 24 hours in the first 24 hours after surgery. If your child has vomiting after that time period, then it is unlikely related to the surgery and is most likely a GI bug. In that case, you should take your child to their pediatrician.
- The fever goes over 102°F (39°C) and **DOES NOT** respond to Tylenol or Motrin. It is common for the fever to go up and down but if it responds to Tylenol or Motrin, then it is ok to monitor.
- Your child has any signs of dehydration.
- The pain is not helped by pain medicine.
- Ear drainage lasts more than 3 days.
- You have other questions or concerns.

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