



Tympanostomy Tube (ear tube) Instructions

Tympanostomy tubes (ear tubes) are small plastic or metal cylinders which are placed into a hole in the eardrum created by the surgeon using the assistance of an operating microscope. The procedure may be performed on adults and children. Common reasons to place ear tubes include repeated middle ear infections and persistent fluid in the middle ear causing hearing loss. This procedure is usually performed under general anesthetic for children, but can be done with a local anesthetic in adults.

What to expect:

- **Tenderness** after ear tubes is typically minimal and any discomfort should easily resolve with plain Tylenol® (acetaminophen). Under usual circumstances, patients feel well within 24 hours and able to resume normal activities.
- **Bleeding:** a small amount of blood may come out of the ear canal after surgery due to the small incision made in the eardrum. This usually resolves with 1-2 days of surgery.
- **Keep water out of the ears after surgery.**
 - After having tubes inserted, be careful to keep water out of the ears completely for the first week. Vaseline® on a cotton ball makes an inexpensive ear plug for baths and showers.
 - Ear plugs need to be worn when swimming in non-chlorinated water (oceans, lakes, rivers, etc.), and your surgeon may prefer that they be worn in chlorinated water too (swimming pools, hot tubs, etc.).
Please ask your surgeon if you have any questions.
- **It is still possible to get an ear infection** with ear tubes, but they decrease the likelihood of infection. If the tubes are open and functioning, there will likely be drainage when the ear is infected. If you see this drainage, call your surgeon for guidance. You will usually be instructed to start a course of ear drops.
- **AIR TRAVEL IS NOT A PROBLEM** with ear tubes. In fact, with the tubes open and functioning, there will be no need to equalize or “pop” the ears with ascent/descent.

Medications:

Antibiotic drops will be prescribed, usually for 3 days after surgery

- Keep antibiotic drops at room temperature. If drops are too cold or warm, they could induce dizziness.
- Turn the patient’s head to the side, gently put the drops into the ear canal, and lightly press on the small, triangular piece of cartilage in front of the ear canal (the tragus) to create a pumping action which pushes the drops further into the ear.

Follow up:

- You will be seen one week after surgery to check the placement of the tubes, and about one month after surgery, at which time a hearing test may be performed.
- The tubes will need to be checked about every 2-3 months after surgery until they fall out.

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