

Operative Instructions Myringotomy and Tubes

What are ear tubes?

Ear tubes (or pressure equalization tubes) are tiny plastic or metal tubes that are placed through the ear drum. They are about the size of one half of a grain of rice. They are inserted by making a small nick in the ear drum. This can be performed under local anesthesia (while awake) or under general anesthesia (asleep).

Most common reasons for ear tubes:

Chronic Otitis Media: Children are more susceptible to ear infections than adults. Their Eustachian tube, the tube that naturally drains the ear, is also less developed than in the adult. Ear tubes provide a temporary way for the ear to drain (without pain), for the ear to be kept dry and free from infection, and for medicines to be placed directly into the ear without the need for systemic antibiotics. Chronic ear infections can also permanently damage hearing; ear tubes have been proven to prevent this.

The Surgery:

The surgery itself takes 5-10 minutes per ear. Placing the child to sleep and safely waking them up may take significantly longer. The child remains at the hospital for 1-2 hours after surgery, or until they are awake enough to go home.

Postoperative Care:

- Most children are back to normal as soon as they recover from the general anesthetic.
- Nausea/ Vomiting- Some children experience nausea and vomiting from the general anesthetic. This occasionally occurs during the first 24 hours after surgery and usually resolves on its own.
- Eating and Drinking- There are no restrictions after surgery.
- Fever- A low grade fever is normal for several days after surgery.

Please call the office if the temperature is over 102°F.

- Ear drainage- It is normal to see some drainage from the ears for the first 2 to 3 days after the ear tubes are inserted. The drainage may be bloody. If the drainage persists for more than three days, there may be an ear infection. If this occurs, please call the office.

- Antibiotic drops are sometimes prescribed after the surgery. The dosing will be provided on the discharge forms.

- Activity- Children may swim with ear tubes in place so long as they swim in a chlorinated pool. No swimming in lakes, streams or the ocean. During baths, the child should not submerge their head in bath water. Hair washing under clean running water is fine.

- Pain- Most children experience little if any pain after surgery. Plain Tylenol or Ibuprofen (Motrin) may be used if needed.