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Tympanostomy and Tube Insertion

What is a tympanostomy and what is the function of the tubes?

It is a small incision in the eardrum to allow for drainage of fluid from the middle ear. The middle ear is located behind the eardrum. The tubes keep the incision in the eardrum open allowing air to ventilate the middle ear.

Why is a tympanostomy necessary?

Usually for one of the following reasons:

- 1) To drain the middle ear fluid that has not responded to antibiotic therapy or which has not cleared up in time.
- 2) To help prevent repeated ear infections despite antibiotic therapy.
- 3) To treat a severe ear infection that has not responded to antibiotics.

What are the risks of tubes?

A few children will still get frequent ear infections even after tubes are in place. There is a small risk that the eardrum will not heal after the tubes come out. If this residual perforation does not eventually heal, it may need to be patched.

What happens the day of surgery?

Your child should not eat or drink anything before the scheduled surgery. The exact time will be discussed with you by your surgery coordinator and this is usually based on the age of the child. He or she will be given a general anesthetic via a mask. The anesthetic will make your child sleep during the procedure. The procedure usually lasts about 20 minutes. Once your child is asleep, the physician is able to look deep into the ear with the aid of a microscope thus visualizing the eardrum. The eardrum is where the small incision will be placed. Fluid is suctioned from the middle ear which is located behind the eardrum. The tube is then inserted into the incision. The purpose of this tube is to allow ventilation of the middle ear and reduce the occurrence of middle ear infections. Antibiotic drops are sometimes placed into the ears via the tube during the procedure and this may or may not be continued for a few days post-operatively. Upon completion of the surgery, your child

will be moved to the recovery area. He or she will be monitored by a nurse until they wake up and this usually is no less than one hour depending on how the child responds to surgery.

****Some children may be groggy, irritable, nauseated and/or appear disoriented. These are all normal side effects and usually subside within a short period after surgery****

Important facts following surgery:

- 1) Use Tylenol or Motrin to relieve any discomfort following surgery. Generic forms of Acetaminophen and Ibuprofen are acceptable.
- 2) School/regular activities may be resumed the day after surgery.
- 3) A small amount of blood and/or pus may drain from the ears after surgery and is normal for the first few days. **CALL THE OFFICE IF DRAINAGE LASTS LONGER THAN 3-4 DAYS.**
- 4) You can clean drainage and/or old blood from your child's outer ear only with a cotton-tip applicator, moistened with equal parts water and hydrogen peroxide.
- 5) **Ear plug usage is optional.** We do sell fitted pro-plugs in our office. We do have to "fit" your child with the correct size and this can be done either prior to surgery or any time after the day of surgery. The cost is \$15 per pair.
- 6) **Swimming:** Most children will not develop ear infections as a result of surface swimming in chemically treated pools. However it is important to make sure the ear is as dry as possible after being in the pool. We do not recommend diving or deep water swimming with tubes in place. Do not use "swimmers ear drops" with alcohol. Swimming should be discontinued when your child has an active draining ear infection after tube placement.
- 7) **Bathing:** Please be careful to avoid allowing soap or soapy water to get in the ear. This may be difficult for children with longer hair and ear plug usage may become necessary. A temporary ear plug can be fashioned from a cotton ball coated with Vaseline (for bath-time usage only.)
- 8) Air travel is permitted after surgery.

Please call our office if you have any questions or concerns. **(210) 614-0171**

****Thank you for allowing us to be your child's ear, nose and throat provider. ****