



EUSTACHIAN TUBE DYSFUNCTION
SPECIAL INSTRUCTION FOR FLYING AND SCUBA DIVING

What is Eustachian Tube Dysfunction (ETD)?

The Eustachian tube is a canal that connects the middle ear space to the back of the nose. Problems arise when it does not open and close well. Symptoms of ETD include a feeling of pressure or fullness in the ear, ear pain, hearing loss, ringing in the ear, dizziness and possibly an echoing sound when you talk.

What causes ETD?

ETD is much more common in children due to the flat angle and narrowness of the tube (see picture below). Causes of blockage and poor function of the ET include poor squeezing function, blocking of the ET from a big adenoid pad or mass, nasal infection or secretions, and middle ear disease. Risk factors for ETD are colds, allergies, rapid changes in pressure, and sudden weight loss.

How is ETD treated?

SEE YOUR ENT PHYSICIAN TO MAKE SURE THERE IS NO INFECTION, MASS, OR TUMOR CAUSING YOUR SYMPTOMS.

The treatment for ETD is aimed at opening up the eustachian tube in the back of the nose. The main treatment is using a steroid nasal spray to help shrink the tissue where the ear drains.

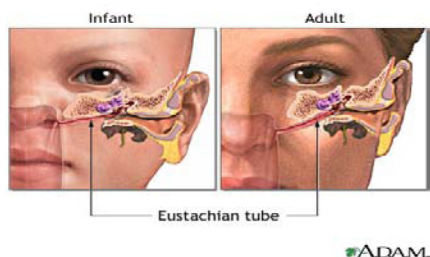
- Nasal steroid (Flonase, Nasonex, Nasacort) – 2 sprays into each nostril twice daily. This may take a few weeks to show any effect
- Neil Med Sinus rinses – 3-5x daily into each nostril
- Try to pop your ears 5-10x daily (this is called auto-insufflation). To do this, hold your nose and pinch the nostrils closed and blow against your fingers and closed nostrils to force the air up into your ears. This will allow you to equalize the pressure as the plane descends or as you dive underwater.

If you have trouble Flying or Scuba Diving:

You may have problems with the descent in the plane or in the water. If so, try the following preventative measures:

- Afrin nasal spray – 2 sprays into each nostril 30 minutes prior to flying/diving and 1 hour before the plane lands. Do not take this for more than 3 days.
- Sudafed 30 milligrams one hour before the plane lands
- If flying and diving is a chronic problem, start a nasal steroid (Flonase, Nasonex, Nasacort) for 2 weeks prior to your trip/dive.
- Pop your ears early and often.
 - o For flying, try to pop your ears as the plane descends.
 - o For diving pop your ears on the surface and essentially with every breath-do not descend head first as you increase the gravitational effects/congestive effects while diving).

FOLLOW UP WITH YOUR ENT PRIOR TO ANY TRIPS OR DIVES IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS.



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