

What to Expect After Ear Tube Removal

RM Rosenfeld

After Surgery

When you greet your child in the recovery room, their mood will be unpredictable. Some children sleep peacefully (lucky you!), but others are very unhappy. Crying or agitation relate more to a sense of disorientation, than to active pain or discomfort. Fortunately, most children do not recall the hour or so they spend in the recovery room. When your child is ready, the anesthesiologist will transfer them to the ambulatory holding area where they can have something to eat and drink. Most children will then be discharged from the hospital within 1-2 hours.

Taking Care of the Ear

The goal of ear care is to maintain a clean and dry environment that offers the maximal chance for complete healing of the eardrum. Do not allow water to enter the ear canal until the first office visit, generally about *6 weeks* after surgery. Cover the ear canal opening with a piece of cotton mixed with Vaseline to prevent water entry during bathing or hair washing. Cotton alone is insufficient, because water may still penetrate between the fibers. A soft ear plug, available in your local pharmacy, may be used if you find it more convenient. There is no need to cover the ear or to use an ear plug during the remainder of the day when your child is not exposed to water. Swimming is not permitted unless specifically authorized by your doctor.

The Office Visit After Surgery

Please schedule an office visit for about *6 weeks* after surgery to check for complete healing of the eardrum and to retest the hearing. During the visit, your doctor will carefully examine the eardrum to check that the small hole at the site of the previous tube is completely closed. Water precautions are not required after the small opening in the eardrum has closed. If you have not arranged a post-operative visit prior to surgery, please call our office in the next few days because visits are generally scheduled several weeks in advance.

Some Things *Not* to Worry About

A *clogged* or *stuffed-up* sensation may be present initially because of ointment placed in the ear canal to promote healing. *Drainage* may occur for several days after surgery, as the ointment softens at body temperature (do not be alarmed if the discharge is mixed with a small amount of blood). *Nausea* or *upset stomach* may occur for up to 24 hours after the brief anesthesia, and require no special treatment. *Pain* is usually minimal and subsides rapidly, but Tylenol may be used as need during the first few days if your child complains of any discomfort. *Antibiotics* are unnecessary after the surgery.

When to Call Us

Please call our office if: 1) drainage from the ear persists longer than 7 days after surgery, 2) pain or discomfort is unrelieved by Tylenol, or 3) pain or discomfort is accompanied by a fever or upper respiratory infection (a middle ear infection may be developing). Ask to speak with the nurse when you call; she will discuss it with the doctor and arrange timely follow-up. Finally, please remember to schedule an office visit for about 6 weeks after surgery if you have not done so already.

I have received a copy of this information sheet.

Parent or Guardian _____ Relation to child _____

Child's name _____ Date _____