

Tympanostomy Tubes (Ear Tubes)

About the Surgery and Consent

This sheet explains ear tube surgery for patients, parents and guardians.

Patient Name: _____ PHN: _____ Date of Birth: _____

1. Why ear tubes are recommended

Ear tubes are recommended to help with one or more of the following:

- In children: ear infections that keep coming back, with fluid behind the eardrum at the visit to check if tubes are needed. Tubes are usually not advised if there is no fluid at that visit.
 - Fluid behind the eardrum for 3 months or more that makes it hard to hear. For children, we also consider other symptoms and risks to learning and growth.
 - Trouble hearing, speaking or learning words due to fluid behind the eardrum
 - Ear pressure or pain from long-lasting fluid, or when the tube that links the ear to the back of the nose does not work well
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2. What the procedure involves

- Children usually have medicine to keep them asleep during surgery (general anesthesia). Some adults can have medicine to numb the ear while they stay awake (local anesthesia).
 - A doctor trained in anesthesia gives the sleep medicine and watches you during surgery.
 - A small opening is made in the eardrum (**myringotomy**)
 - The surgeon may remove fluid from behind the eardrum.
 - A small tube is placed in the eardrum to let air in and fluid out.
 - Surgery usually takes 5–15 minutes, but may take longer.
 - Most patients go home the **same day**
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3. How tubes may help

Tubes may help by:

- Making ear infections less frequent or less severe
- Helping you hear better if there was fluid behind the eardrum
- Easing ear pressure or pain caused by long-lasting fluid
- Reduced need for antibiotics in some cases

Important: Tubes may help hearing if there is fluid behind the eardrum, but they may not help everyone. Ear infections can still happen. Better hearing may not lead to better speech or language.

4. Risks and side effects

Common or expected:

- Mild ear discomfort for 1–2 days
- Fluid leaking from the ear for a short time, often after a cold
- A little blood in the fluid from the ear just after surgery

Less common but important:

- A blocked tube, which may stop it from working well
 - A tube that falls out too soon or stays in too long
 - Fluid that keeps leaking from the ear and needs drops or other treatment
 - A hole in the eardrum that does not close after the tube comes out. Surgery may be needed to close it.
 - Scarring on the eardrum (usually does not affect hearing)
 - Need for repeat tubes if problems return after tubes come out
 - Risks from the medicine used to keep you asleep or numb the ear. These will be explained to you.
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5. Water and ear care

- Baths and showers are usually fine
- Children with ear tubes do not usually need earplugs for swimming. Plugs may help if water causes pain or drainage, or for lake water or deep diving. Follow your doctor's advice. If needed, custom earplugs are available in our office.

6. Other choices

Other choices may include:

- Waiting and watching for changes
- Medicines, such as antibiotics when needed
- Hearing tests and follow-up visits
- No treatment

7. Recovery and follow-up

- Most patients return to normal activities within **24 hours**
- Most children do not need antibiotic ear drops just after tube surgery. If an infection causes fluid to leak through a tube, drops are often enough. A more serious infection may need other treatment. Follow the directions on the prescription.
- Children should have an ear check within 3 months, then regular checks until the tubes come out. Hearing may also be checked. Adults should follow the plan given by their surgeon.

Get medical help for:

- A lot of fluid from the ear, or leaking that does not stop
- Increasing pain, fever, or worsening symptoms
- Concerns about hearing changes

8. My understanding

The surgery, risks, possible benefits, other choices and care after surgery have been explained to me. My questions have been answered. I understand that I still need to complete the hospital consent form.

Patient / Parent / Guardian Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____