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Ear Tube Post-Operative Care Information

General Information

Tubes typically last 6-24 months. Most tubes fall out on their own. If they do not come out on their own, they may need to be removed by your doctor.

Drainage from the ears is common after surgery. Your child will be started on ear drops by your physician. The drops will be given to you on the day of surgery.

If there is fluid in your child's ears prior to surgery, everything will be loud after the tubes have been placed. Such a shift in volume can be startling to your child. Do not be alarmed this sensation can last for a prolonged period of time.

Your child will see their medical provider back every 3-6 months. At this time they will assess the tubes to ensure that they are still in place and functioning, if the tubes have fallen out, and if the hole in the eardrum from the tubes has healed once the tubes have fallen out.

Activity

Children may return to school or day-care the day after surgery. Physical education and sports can be resumed the day after surgery.

Ear Infections with Tubes

Your child may still get ear infections with tubes in place. When an infection occurs, the ear should drain and smell badly. Drainage from the ear is an indicator that the tube is working. Allowing the infection to drain from the ear is a good thing! Drainage can be clear, cloudy, or bloody.

Ear drops are the most effective way to treat infections when there are tubes in place. Lay your child on their side with the affected ear facing up. Apply the drops to the ear and the pump the skin flap (tragus) over the ear canal several times to push the drops into the ear. Oral antibiotics are not typically needed for ear infections when the tubes are in place and functioning properly. Occasionally they may be needed if your child is very ill or the ear drops have not been effective.

Water precautions

Ear plugs are usually not necessary for swimming or bathing after tubes. Water will not typically go through the tube during swimming/bathing.

Situations where ear plugs may be necessary:

- Ear pain or discomfort with swimming
- Drainage from the ear canal
- Swimming deeper than 6 ft under water
- Lake or ocean swimming

Swim plugs may be purchased over the counter or fitted ones can be purchased from the office if needed.

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