How to care for your child after ear surgery.

Myringoplasty, Tympanoplasty and Mastoidectomy
General information and care after surgery

How should I care for my child’s ear after surgery?

• Be gentle with your child’s ear.
• Make sure your hands are clean when doing any ear care.
• Avoid and prevent any hits or bumps while the ear is healing.
• Apply ear drops as directed by your doctor.
• Bathing and water exposure to the operated ear:
  o Keep water out of your child’s ear until their follow-up visit with the doctor after surgery.
  o Wait at least 2 days after surgery to wash your child’s hair.
  o Use wax ear plugs or cotton balls covered with Vaseline to keep water out of your child’s ear canal when they take a bath or shower after surgery.
• Use cotton in the ear only while sleeping or after putting in ear drops.
• Avoid strenuous activities for at least 2 weeks or as directed by your doctor.
• If you travel a distance to the hospital, you can drive or fly home within 2 days of surgery. Avoid driving over high mountain passes or flying between 2 days and 4 weeks after surgery.
• Your child may notice that food may taste different after surgery on one side of the tongue. This usually goes away after a few weeks.

How should I care for the incision?

• There may be stitches behind your child’s ear. These will dissolve.
• Keep the incision dry for 2 days. After 2 days if there is any blood, debris, or ear drainage on the incision, gently wash it off with mild soap and water then pat dry.
• Apply antibiotic ointment to the incision 1 to 2 times per day as directed by your doctor.
• Some incisions may have a clear plastic (Steri-strips or Tegaderm) dressing. It will come off in about 1 week.

If you notice oozing from the incision, swelling or redness, contact the Otolaryngology Clinic (206-987-2105) during business hours or the Otolaryngology (ear nose and throat) resident on call (206-987-2131) after hours and weekends.
What should I do if my child has drainage from the ear?

Often gelfoam (gelatin like material) is placed in the ear canal during surgery. It will slowly come out of the ear over the next few weeks. It is normal to have pink or bloody drainage from the ear canal after surgery. Use the ear drops as directed. Call your doctor or nurse if the ear drainage becomes thick, yellow or smells bad.

What should I do if my child has pain?

Your child’s ear will feel uncomfortable for the first few days after surgery. Use acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen to relieve discomfort. Some patients may also get a prescription for oxycodone. Use this medicine only if recommend by your health care provider. Check with your doctor first before giving any type of medicine to your child. Rest will help, too. If your child has extreme pain or discomfort, please call your doctor or nurse.

What should I do if my child catches a cold right after surgery?

It is hard to avoid colds, but please try. Getting plenty of rest, eating a balanced diet, and washing hands often will help. If your child catches a cold, help them to not blow their nose with force. Gently clear all secretions from nose and mouth. Remind your child to sneeze with their mouth open. This will help prevent extra pressure in the ears.

To Learn More

- Otolaryngology 206-987-2105
- Your child’s healthcare provider
- www.seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your child’s nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

Seattle Children’s offers interpreter services for Deaf, hard of hearing or non-English speaking patients, family members and legal representatives free of charge. Seattle Children’s will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call the Family Resource Center at 206-987-2201. This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children’s. However, your child’s needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child’s healthcare provider.

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