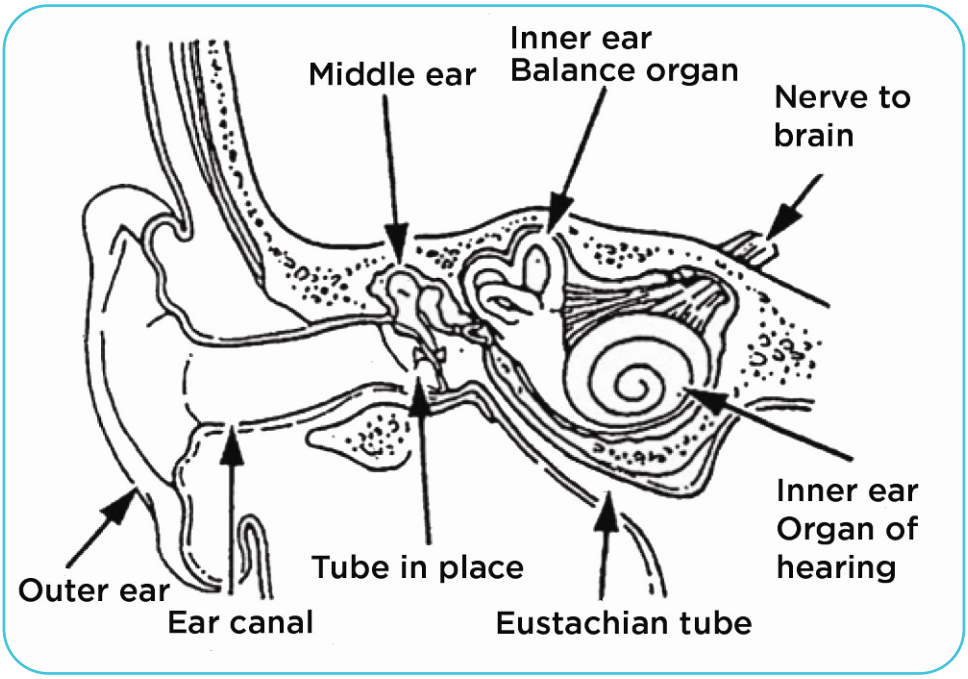
Ear Tubes and Your Child

After-surgery care



What is a "myringotomy with tubes"?

A myringotomy with tubes is ear surgery done under general anesthesia. A small hole is made in the eardrum so fluid can be removed from the middle ear. A tiny, 2-mm tube is inserted into the hole, allowing air into the middle ear. This prevents fluid from building up again.

Should my child have a fever afterwards?

After surgery, a slightly high temperature of 99° F to 100°F is normal. If the fever is 101.5°F or higher, give Tylenol or generic (store-brand) acetaminophen according to the package instructions. Please **do not** use aspirin. If the fever stays over 101.5°F for 24 hours, call your doctor or nurse.

Will my child be in pain?

Often, there is no pain because the ears feel better once the middle ear pressure is reduced. Your child may hear better and complain that things are too loud. Use Tylenol or generic acetaminophen according to the package instructions to control the discomfort. Please **do not** use aspirin.

How much drainage should there be?

Thin, pink, watery drainage from the ear is normal right after surgery. This may last up to 3 days. If the drainage becomes foul-smelling, thick or yellow/green in color, continue the eardrops and call your doctor or nurse.

To Learn More

- Otolaryngology Clinic 206-987-2105
- Ask your child's nurse or doctor
- 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.
- For Deaf and hard of hearing callers 206-987-2280 (TTY)

What about eating afterwards?

Encourage your child to drink lots of liquids and progress to a regular diet after surgery. If you bottle-feed your child, do so in an upright position (this keeps fluid away from the eustachian tube).

What about eardrops?

Use the eardrops that the doctor gives you for 3 days. Place 3 drops in each ear, 3 times daily, for 3 days. These drops often are "ophthalmic" (eye) drops, but they can be used safely in the ear.

What about regular activity?

We encourage regular activity the day after the procedure. Airplane travel is all right too, because the ear tube equalizes the air pressure.

What about ear infections?

Continuous drainage from the ear is a sign of an infection. Should this happen, begin eardrops and call your doctor or nurse. Ear tubes do not prevent all ear infections. However, they will usually reduce the frequency of the infections.

How about water in the ears?

Bathing or swimming in clean water is OK, even the day after surgery. For swimming in lake, ocean or pond water, we recommend ear plugs.

Do the tubes need to be removed?

Not usually. Most ear tubes naturally fall out within two years. Sometimes, the ear tube does not come out on its own. If the tube is still in after two years, check with your ENT doctor to see if they need to be removed. Leaving the tube in for longer than two years can cause a hole in the eardrum, which might need to be repaired.

What about follow-up care?

After your post-operative visit with us, your primary care provider can resume regular care of your child. If your child's doctor feels there is a problem needing our attention, please call our clinic for an appointment. If the tubes are still in place after one year, visit your ENT doctor.

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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