

**Tympanostomy tubes** are small plastic or metal tubes that are placed into the tympanic membrane or ear drum.

**How long will the tube stay in place?**

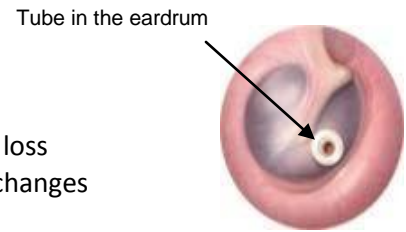
Tubes usually fall out of the ear in 6 months- 2 years. If they remain in longer than 2 to 3 years they are sometimes removed.

**What is involved with Tympanostomy tube placement?**

This surgery is usually done under general anesthesia. The eardrum is examined using a microscope. A small hole is made in the ear drum called a myringotomy, fluid is removed, and the tube is placed.

**What medical conditions are treated with tubes?**

- Recurrent middle ear infections or frequent acute otitis media
- Otitis media with effusion or fluid in middle ear associated with hearing loss
- Eustachian tube dysfunction causing hearing loss or eardrum structure changes



**What is the Eustachian tube?**

This is the canal that links the middle ear with the throat. This tube allows air into the middle ear and drainage of fluid. This tube grows in width and length until children are about 5 years old.

**Reasons that the Eustachian tube may not work properly:**

Viral illness, exposure to allergens or tobacco smoke may lead to swelling of the eustachian tube resulting in fluid buildup in the middle ear. Children with cleft palate and craniofacial syndromes like Down's syndrome may have poor eustachian tube function.

**How will Tympanostomy tube help my child?**

- They allow air to re-enter middle ear space
- They reduce the number and severity of infections
- They improve hearing loss caused by middle ear fluid

**Why is adenoidectomy sometimes done with the Tympanostomy tubes?**

Adenoidectomy is the removal of the adenoid tissue behind the nose. Enlarged adenoids may cause blockage of the Eustachian tube. Adenoidectomy is done when tubes are being placed a second time or if adenoid tissue causes chronic nasal congestion or blockage.

**Are there water or swimming restrictions after the Tympanostomy tubes are placed?**

- We routinely **do not** recommend ear plugs while swimming or bathing in most children.
- We recommend earplugs or ear bands in children who develop frequent drainage after swimming or bathing.
- Diving should be avoided while the tubes remain in the ears.

### **What are the risks of Tympanostomy Tubes?**

This list is for information only and covers most known risks for this surgery. Complications are very rare. When considering surgery it is important to weigh risks and benefits of the surgery. The following complications have been reported in the medical literature included: Tympanic membrane perforation or hole in the eardrum, scar on the eardrum, hearing loss, tubes may fall out too early or stay in too long, ongoing ear infections or ear drainage. Children may need tubes more than once.

### **Are there activity restrictions after Tympanostomy tube placement?**

- Quiet play for the remainder of the surgery day, resume normal activity the next day
- Most children may return to school 1 or 2 days after surgery
- If an adenoidectomy was done, no strenuous physical activity for 7 days

### **What are the common complaints after surgery?**

- **Nausea and vomiting:** For 24 hours
- **Pain:** Mild to moderate ear pain for 7 days
- **Fever:** A low-grade fever for several days
- **Ear Drainage:** A small amount of clear, pink, or bloody drainage for 5 days

### **Do Tympanostomy tubes cause drainage?**

Some children with tubes will have drainage from the ears. This is many times seen with a cold or runny nose. Less frequently this may be from a reaction to the tubes itself. Drainage is treated with antibiotic ear drops for 10-14 days.

### **What medications are recommendations after Tympanostomy tube placement?**

- **Pain control:** Use Tylenol or ibuprofen (Motrin).
- **Antibiotic eardrops** may be prescribed for several days.

### **Contact your physician after surgery for:**

- Fever greater than 102°
- Severe ear pain or pain noted more than 7 days after surgery
- Fullness in the ears or around the ears
- Drainage or blood from the ears noted more than 7 days after surgery

**Follow up appointment:** Schedule appointment for 3-4 weeks after surgery.

**Please call us for questions or concerns. During business hours: Stacey Ishman, M.D. 410-502-3225, Sandra Lin, M.D. 410-614-6243, Emily Boss, M.D. 410-955-9772, Margaret Skinner, M.D. 410-502-6625, David Tunkel, M.D. 410-955-1559, Melinda DeSell, C.R.N.P. 410-502-6188.**

**For emergencies: 410-955-6070, ask for the Pediatric Otolaryngology physician (Peds ENT) on-call.**

### **Web Sites**

<http://www.petube.org/>

<http://www.robbythebear.org/>

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tutorials/otitismedia/htm/index.htm>

<http://www.entnet.org/healthinfo/ears/Ear-Tubes.cfm>

<http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/hearing/otitism.htm>

### **Spanish web sites:**

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/spanish/tutorials/otitismediaspanish/htm/index.htm>