

## Ear Tubes

### Postoperative Instructions

***Water Exposure*** Ear tubes make children very resistant to ear infections by temporarily creating a tiny hole in the eardrum for air ventilation purposes. Water getting deeply in the ear with tubes in place is not painful, but could allow water to get behind the eardrum which can increase the risk of an ear infection. Therefore, an attempt should be made to keep water out of the ears while the tubes are in place. This is a general guideline, not a life-or-death matter, so do not worry *excessively* about it. Children can still go swimming but we recommend having our office make custom fit silicone earplugs to keep water out of the ears during baths and swimming. Moldable wax plugs are available at most pharmacies. A barrier of cotton coated with Vaseline is also effective. Tubes usually stay in place for about 12 months and are then gradually and painlessly extruded by the eardrum.

***Ear drops*** If the continued use of ear drops is required during the first few days after surgery (determined by the condition of the ears on the day of surgery) Dr. Kronenberger will issue these drops with instructions before you leave the surgery center (the surgeon puts the first dose in at surgery). These drops are important because they contain an antibiotic and an anti-inflammatory medicine. The drops treat the ear fluid/infection and also minimize the chance that the tubes will become blocked in the early period right after surgery.

***Drainage*** There may or may not be any ear drainage in the first few days after surgery. This depends on the condition of the ears at the time of surgery. In either case, just keep using the ear drops as instructed and there should not be any drainage when you are finished with the course of ear drops. At any time after the initial postoperative period, drainage from the ear while the tubes are in place indicates an infection. The discharge is usually copious, obvious, may be yellow or even bloody, and may have an odor. This requires treatment with eardrops prescribed either by this office or your pediatrician.

***Pain*** There is usually no significant pain after ear tube surgery. Children may be fussy briefly after surgery but this is not an indication of pain. It is more likely to be due to sleep schedule disruption, hunger, or uncertainty about what all the excitement is about. Use Children's Motrin or Tylenol if necessary.

***Follow up*** Please call our office and schedule a follow-up appointment for about weeks after surgery. This visit is to check that the ear tubes are functioning properly, that all infection/fluid has resolved, and that hearing has normalized. It is an excellent time to make earplugs, if desired.

***For questions or problems*** Call *Ear, Nose & Throat Specialty Care* at (214) 826-3681, or after hours call (214) 346-1359.