

EAR TUBES

404-255-2033



PENTA
Pediatric ENT of Atlanta
Where Children Are First

Note: This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's medical team about specific care for your child.

WHAT IS MYRINGOTOMY AND TYMPANOSTOMY TUBE INSERTION?

More commonly known as ear tubes, or BM&T (bilateral myringotomy and tympanostomy tubes), this is a procedure where an incision is made into the ear drum, fluid from the middle ear is removed, and a small tube is inserted into the ear drum to keep the middle ear open for a longer time, which helps prevent fluid from reaccumulating in that space. There are several indications for ear tube insertion, which your provider will discuss with you. These small ear tubes usually stay in the ear drum for approximately 8-15 months (on average) and may fall out by themselves. There is no way of knowing how long ear tubes will remain in place when they are inserted. The procedure only takes a few minutes and is typically very well-tolerated.

WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER SURGERY?

- **DIET** – Your child may eat or drink whatever they like after surgery. It is recommended to start with clear liquids (water, juice, sports drinks, etc.) to avoid nausea and vomiting from the anesthesia.
- **ACTIVITY** – Starting the day after surgery, there are **no restrictions on physical or social activities**. Your child may return to school, sports, or organized activities as tolerated.
- **PAIN** – Your child may experience little to no pain after surgery. However, if you think your child is in discomfort, they may have over-the-counter acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Motrin®) as needed. Please follow dosing per the medication labels.
- **FEVER** – up to 101.5°F is very common for the first few days following surgery. This is part of the body's inflammatory response to surgery and can be treated with over-the-counter fever reducers. If it is persistent or very high, please call our office.
- **BLEEDING/EAR DRAINAGE** – Mucus, blood-tinged fluid, and bleeding from the ears are all normal for the first 2-3 days after ear tube insertion, especially if there was an active ear infection at the time of the procedure. If you see heavy bleeding from the ear, please call our office.

WATER RESTRICTIONS:

First 48 hours after surgery – KEEP THE EARS DRY. Try to avoid bathing on the night after surgery, but if your child **needs** a bath, do not wash above the neck.

After the first 48 hours – Children with ear tubes **DO NOT** need to wear ear plugs unless they are swimming deep or swimming in “dirty”/untreated water (lakes, rivers, oceans). Occasionally, a child with ear tubes may have pain with water exposure. If this occurs, they may use ear plugs (which are available over-the-counter and are also sold in our offices). If your child is experiencing ear drainage, avoid water exposure to the ears until it clears.

*Note: while ear tubes are in place, do not use over-the-counter swimmers ear drops or medicated drops intended to treat pain. They may cause extreme pain if given.



EAR DRAINAGE AND MEDICATION EAR DROPS:

You will be given a prescription for ear drops for use after surgery either at your pre-operative visit or on the day of the procedure. Sometimes, the surgeon will have you administer them to your child's ears for a few days after surgery. If you are told that the ear drops are not needed directly after surgery, save your prescription (have pharmacy put it on file) for future use.

If/when your child develops an ear infection while having functioning ear tubes, ear drainage (usually cloudy, yellow thin to thick mucus) is typically seen. If seen, please start using the prescription antibiotic ear drops as directed (usually 4-5 drops to affected ear twice per day for 5-7 days). Ear drops tend to feel better to children when they are close to body temperature, so you may want to bring them to room temperature prior to giving them by warming the bottle in your hands. To administer the ear drops, place the drops into the ear canal(s) and then pump the small part in front of the ear canal several times to help push the drops into the ears. It is OK if some of the drops drip out once your child sits up. Many kids do not like the feeling of ear drops, which is normal. However, if your child has extreme pain with the ear drops, which is rare, please stop using them and call the office. Keep the ears dry until drainage has stopped or otherwise directed. If the drainage continues after 7 days of treatment, call the office at 404-255-2033 for an appointment to be evaluated.

FOLLOW UP:

Your child needs to be seen 4-6 weeks after surgery by one of our Advanced Practice Providers (Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants) to check the ear tubes, repeat a hearing test, and discuss ear tube maintenance. After the initial post-operative visit, we will see your child every 6 months (or as directed) to monitor the ear tubes until the tubes falls out. Follow up visits will likely be scheduled with an Advanced Practice Provider, who will involve the physician as needed.

**In the case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911
or go to the nearest emergency department right away.**

**Please call your PENTA medical team if you have any questions or concerns about
how your child looks or feels after surgery at 404-591-1288 (M-F 8AM-5PM)
or 404-255-2033 (after hours to reach the on-call provider)**

