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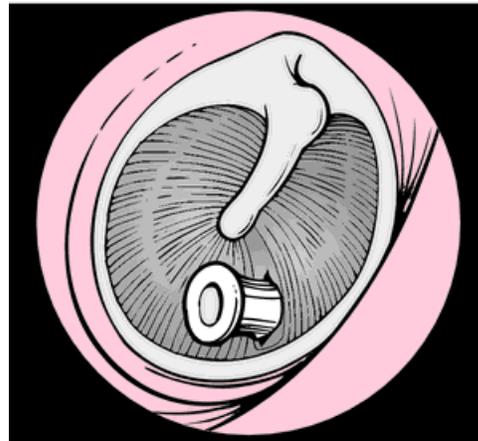
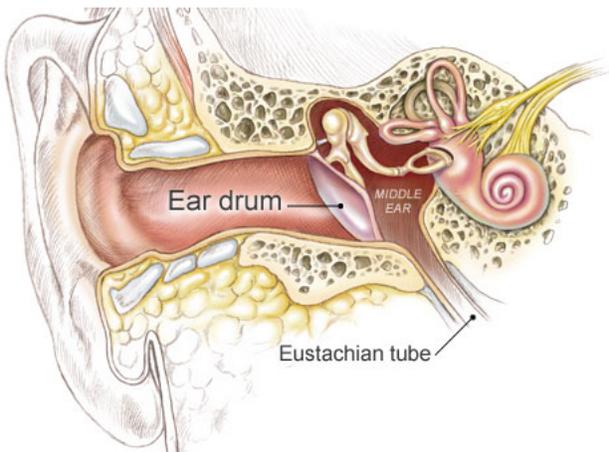


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PATIENT EDUCATION ON TYMPANOSTOMY WITH TUBES

The back of the nose and the middle ear are connected by a tube called the “Eustachian tube.” The middle is the space behind the ear drum. This tube has three purposes: to drain the ear, to allow air into the ear, and to protect the ear. In many young children, and some adults, the tube does not function properly. When this happens, an infection or “dysfunction” of the middle ear may occur.



The conditions that necessitate tympanostomy tube placement include: Fluid in the middle ear space (chronic serous otitis media), recurrent infections (acute otitis media), chronic eustachian tube dysfunction, and conductive hearing loss. In all of these conditions the middle ear space cannot adequately drain fluid or get enough air into the space to achieve a normal pressure. This predisposes the person to ear infections and hearing loss.

Placing a Pressure Equalization Tube (PE Tube, also called a ventilation tube) through the ear drum allows the fluid to be drained and air to enter the middle ear space. Although this procedure is most common in children, it is also done for adults who have these types of ear conditions.

The surgery is done with minimal anesthesia either gas or an intravenous injection ('twilight anesthesia'). The patient goes home the same day. There is usually no significant pain or recovery time. Sometimes there is some drainage for several days requiring the use of ear drops. The tube usually remains in place for 8 months to a year. It cannot be seen except by use of an otoscope by a physician. The tube is gradually pushed out as the skin of the ear drum is shed. This is not a painful process. The ear drum heals up behind it over 95% of the time. If there is a residual perforation, it may require an additional procedure to patch the hole. Sometimes the tube will come out early or remain in for an extended period of time and have to be removed. Eighty percent of children who need tubes in the ears will only need them once.

While the tubes are in the ears it is important to take precautions to prevent water from getting in the ears as this can lead to an ear infection. If there is an ear infection when a tube is in there will be drainage from the ear. Ear plugs should be used with bathing or swimming.

The patient is seen for follow up two weeks after the procedure. After that follow up visits are every six months to check on the tubes unless there is a problem.