

Ear Tube Surgery

Ear tube surgery: What it is

Myringotomy and tympanostomy tube surgery, commonly referred to as "having tubes put in" is one of the most common pediatric surgical procedures. The surgery is typically scheduled when a child has been diagnosed with several middle ear infections. An otolaryngologist (Ear, Nose, and Throat specialist) will assess the child's condition and decide whether surgery is necessary.

What to expect.

If your child does need ear tube surgery, it may reduce your anxiety, and therefore your child's, to know exactly what's going to happen.

A note on fasting.

Your surgeon's office will give you a list of pre-operative instructions before the day of your child's procedure. One of the instructions is restricting food and liquids the night before and day of the surgery. It is important to follow these instructions carefully. Food or liquids in the stomach can cause anesthetic complications.

Don't be afraid to ask questions. Is apple juice considered a clear liquid? What about a popsicle? When can she eat? The staff will be able to answer your questions, and you'll feel better knowing how to take care of your child before their procedure.

If you choose to fast with your child, pack a carbohydrate snack to eat during her procedure like a cracker / Banana / muffin. Carbohydrates will recharge your energy so you can be ready to help your child post-procedure.

Anxiety on the big day.

It's natural that you and your child may be nervous about her upcoming ear tube surgery. If your child is old enough to understand, it may help to talk them through what will happen. If not, then it is important for you to try to be as calm and confident as possible. The calmer you are, the calmer your child will be.

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Preparing for surgery.

You will meet with your child's surgeon and anesthesiologist before the procedure begins. Children remain in their own clothes, do not have an IV, or any injections, until they are safely anesthetized with nitrous oxide, so you know what to expect.

The procedure explained.

Your child will be anesthetized; she is not awake during the procedure. The surgeon will make a small incision in the membrane of the ear drum. A tube is inserted into the ear drum to allow fluid to escape and equalize pressure in the middle ear. The tube is very small, usually no more than 1-½ millimeters. The surgery is often performed on both ears, but may only be performed on one.

That's it. Your child will wake up in Recovery and after all discharge criteria are met she will be discharged and sent home with post-operative care instructions. This procedure is typically outpatient, meaning your child will not have to stay overnight.

Expected outcomes.

The tubes will remain in the ear until they are eventually pushed out by the healing ear drum. Depending on the type of tubes used, this can take between 6 and 18 months from the time of the surgery. Pediatricians usually find the tubes in the child's ear canal. This is safe and completely normal.

The presence of the hole in the ear drum or the tube does not hurt the child's hearing. In fact, it may help children suffering from speech or language delay due to hearing loss. Children who suffered from chronic, painful ear infections may also sleep better as a result of the tubes, which can be good news for the whole family.

Any questions or concerns, please contact the office!