

Ventilation Tubes

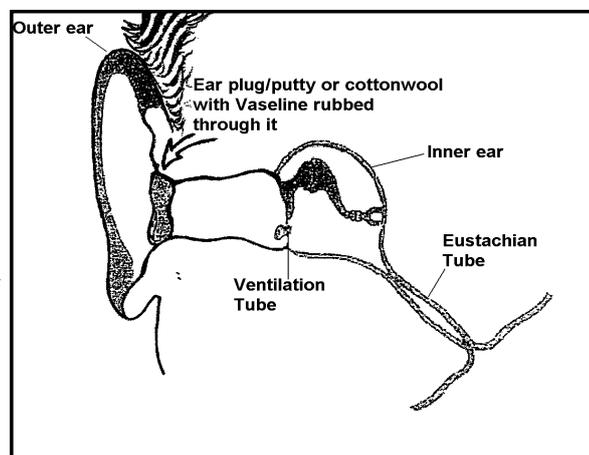
Discharge advice - Otolaryngology Department

What are ventilation tubes?

A ventilation tube is a small plastic tube (about 3 mm in diameter) inserted into a cut made in the eardrum.

What do they do?

They are put in to treat “glue ear” (middle ear fluid) or recurrent ear infections. They let air in to ventilate the middle ear so that it stops a build up of fluids. Any discharge, if it occurs, will be painless.



How long do they stay?

Tubes slowly move out of the eardrums, usually in 9-18 months, the ear usually returns to normal. Surgical removal is rarely necessary. Once the tubes come out of the eardrums, children may have further middle ear problems, possibly requiring another set of tubes.

Precautions

- It is important to keep soapy and dirty water out of the treated ears. Water containing soap and shampoo can easily pass through the tubes and carry bacteria into the middle ear.
- When washing hair, use fingers, ear plugs/silicone putty/blue-tack or cotton wool with Vaseline rubbed through it to stop water entering the middle ear.
- Your child may swim one month after surgery. Most children can swim without ear protection. Diving is unwise, as this may force water into the middle ear, causing an ear infection.
- If an infection occurs after swimming, get it treated and use ear protection from then on.

Complications

- Infection is the main problem that can occur with tubes. If an ear runs for more than a day, see your GP for eardrops.
- If an ear runs for more than a week, despite treatment, contact the ORL clinic, as specialist treatment may be needed.
- After the tube comes out of the eardrum, a small hole may remain. This hole usually causes few problems and often heals by itself. Persisting holes require observation and may need to be repaired.

Turn over for more info

Follow up

It is important to attend any outpatient appointments that you receive. The first follow-up appointment is usually 4-6 weeks after surgery. It is important to check the ear is healthy at this stage.

Further appointments will then be arranged. We need to check that the ears return to normal when the tubes fall out and no further treatment is needed.

Contact Details

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