



WILKINSON SNOWDEN OTOLARYNGOLOGY CONSULTANTS, P.A.

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Instruction Sheet
PE TUBES

General:

Pressure equalization tubes are tiny, plastic-like tubes that are placed in the eardrum in an effort to allow the middle ear area to ventilate itself and to drain properly. Because your child's Eustachian tube is not working properly, this P.E. tube will, in effect, act as a temporary Eustachian tube. The tubes will remain in place approximately one to two years; however, in some instances the tubes may fall out much earlier, while others may stay in a good bit longer. The tubes will extrude with no evidence of pain or discomfort. The remaining hole in the eardrum will usually heal nicely on its own. Although PE tubes are not always the perfect remedy for chronic ear infections and chronic fluid in the ears, they have been shown to offer significant improvement in the vast majority of cases.

A main concern with placement of tubes is an avoidance of water in the ear. As there is now an effective hole in the eardrum, water can get behind the eardrum and potentially cause an ear infection. Therefore, we recommend avoidance of swimming unless a watertight earplug is used. If at anytime the ear is draining, we recommend absolute avoidance of swimming or water in the ear. Hair can be washed by placing a dry washcloth over the ear, or by using an earplug or a cotton ball lightly coated with Vaseline in the ear. A child's head can also be placed in your hand and washed as if he or she were an infant. We generally recommend soft silicone earplugs, which can be obtained at any pharmacy. These can be fashioned into a "Hershey's kiss" shape with the tapered end directed into the ear canal. If you bring them with you to the office we will be happy to show you how to apply them. Custom earplugs can also be obtained and may be easier to use for swimming.

In general, common sense and reasonable avoidance of water in the ear will avoid any significant problems. Wind, changes in the weather, and airplane flights will have no effect on the tubes.

POST-OPERATIVELY:

During the immediate post-operative period your child will generally experience little if any pain. Most children are back to their normal routine within 24 hours. There may be some bloody or clear fluid drainage from the ear after placement of the tubes for a few days. Wipe this with a washcloth or clean with hydrogen peroxide (do not use alcohol in the ear while tubes are in place.) You will be instructed to place the antibiotic drops in both ears. This regimen should also be applied if and when the ears drain at anytime in the future. If the drainage continues you need to notify our office. If there are associated symptoms such as fever, cough, congestion, it may be wise to notify your pediatrician. Pulling at the ears, placing hands over the ears, and temporary slight imbalance are common post-operatively.

Your child will be seen in the office one month post-operatively and then approximately every six months thereafter. If there are any problems during this period, we would of course be happy to see your child as necessary.