

Pressure Equalizing Tube (PET) After Care

Why does my child need tubes in his/her ears?

Tubes are placed in children's ears to treat recurrent ear infections and/or fluid in the middle ear. A small incision will be made in your child's eardrum in order for the tubes to be inserted. The procedure for making the incision is called a myringotomy, which comes from two Latin root words for "eardrum" (myringo) and "to cut" (tomy). The goal of PET insertion is to **decrease** the number of ear infections, make them less painful and easier to treat with drops, and to improve hearing (by removing fluid behind the eardrum). The average child with PET's will have one episode of draining ear (ear infection) a year while the tube is functional, though up to 5 – 10 % of children will experience multiple episodes of drainage. Most of the time the drainage can be treated with drops and not require oral antibiotics. The PETs almost always fall out of the eardrum over time. The average time a PET stays in place and functional is around 9 - 12 months, though they can fall out as early as a month or need to be removed after several years. If the tubes fall out before your child outgrows ear problems, another set may be necessary. Most children eventually outgrow these ear problems.

What should I expect?

- Drainage from the ears may occur for a few days. It may appear clear, pink or blood-tinged. If after five days, the drainage persists, becomes thick and yellow or has a foul odor, please call the ENT Clinic.
- Some ear discomfort may be experienced, though usually this is not significant. For pain relief you may administer acetaminophen (i.e. Tylenol®) products up to every four hours following package directions.

Administering ear drops: Use the drops for _____ days.

Your child's doctor may have given you drops to use in your child's ear(s). If so, give your child as instructed by the doctor the correct number of drops in the left, right, or both ears. Be sure to administer the drops at the correct times during the day for the total number of days.

1. Have your child lie down with his/her head turned to the side.
2. For children 3 years old and younger, gently pull the ear lobe downward and straight back. For children over 3 years old, gently pull upper rim of the ear up and back.
3. After administering the ear drops, while your child is lying down, gently massage the area in front of the ear to help the drops go in.
4. Keep the remaining drops. If drainage should occur at a later time, begin using the drops again and call the clinic; often times the drainage will resolve with drops and not require an office visit.

What about water exposure?

In the past, tradition dictated that the ears should be protected from any water exposure with PETs in place. More recent studies show that complete water restriction is not necessary for most children. Most children can bath, splash in shallow water (such as kiddie pool), shower, etc, without wearing any protection to keep out water. It is recommended that ear plugs be used if swimming more than 6 – 12 inches under water or in untreated water (such as lake, creek or ocean water). If your child develops frequent ear drainage, then it is recommended to start wearing ear plugs with any water exposure to see if water exposure is the cause.

Follow up observation: Follow up in clinic on _____ at _____ a.m. / p.m.



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