



## Central Texas ENT

1301 W. 38<sup>th</sup> St., Suite 401 Austin, Texas 78705 512-458-4276

*Head and Neck Surgery  
Diseases of the Ears, Nose and Throat  
Voice Disorders  
Audiology and Hearing Aids  
- Adult and Pediatric -*

### POSTOPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS FOR EAR VENTILATION TUBES

Ventilation tubes help to prevent the accumulation of middle ear fluid by allowing air into the space behind the eardrum. By removing the fluid, infections are less likely, and hearing is improved. The tubes will remain in place in the ear drum for a variable period of time, usually 6 to 18 months. Very uncommonly they may come out sooner. If the tubes are still in place after two years, your doctor may discuss removal of the tubes. Your ENT doctor or pediatrician will check the ears periodically to see if the tubes are still in place and functioning.

**Water Protection:** The tube in the ear drum maintains a small opening into the space behind the ear drum. This space is called the middle ear. If contaminated water enters the middle ear, an infection can occur. We recommend usage of ear plugs to help keep water out of the ears when swimming. Older children who like to swim under the surface of the water may benefit from a head band to keep the ear plugs in place. Those who swim very frequently or competitively may want to consider having custom ear plugs made. This service can be provided by our Audiology Department personnel. Young children who won't put their heads under the water are not likely to get water in the ear. Ear plugs are not essential in these children. When bathing or washing the hair, water is unlikely to enter the ear canal when the head is in an upright position, such as when standing in the shower, or sitting up in a bathtub. Risk of water entering the ear is much higher if a child lies down with the ears under the water. If your child is a dolphin in the tub, best to use ear plugs!

**Bleeding or Drainage:** If the middle ear is infected or contains fluid at the time of the operation, there may be drainage for up to a week. A small amount of blood in the ear is quite common as well. Usually ear drops will be prescribed for usage after the tubes are placed. This may be from 3 to 7 days duration, depending on the status of the ear at the time of surgery. Drainage and any bleeding should stop by the time the ear drops are completed. If drainage or bleeding persists after the drops are finished, you should notify the office. If drainage or bleeding occurs at a later time, contact our office or the pediatrician. Drainage that does not respond to treatment should be evaluated by the ENT doctor.

**Miscellaneous:** A small percentage of children may have a small hole in the ear drum (**perforation**) after the tubes have come out. This may require another procedure to repair the ear drum. Timing of the operation depends on the size of the perforation and the age of the child. A hole in the ear drum requires further usage of an ear plug when swimming, and may cause a temporary decrease in hearing.

If you have other questions or concerns, please call our office at (512) 458-4276, during business hours during the week (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.). For emergencies after hours or during the weekend, call the Medical Exchange at (512) 458-1121, and ask for the doctor on call.