



## **EAR TUBES**

The insertion of eardrum tubes, also known as bilateral myringotomy and tubes (BMT), is a procedure that is performed mainly to treat chronic ear infections (otitis media) or persistent fluid buildup in the middle ear that does not respond to other treatments. The purpose of the procedure is to ventilate the middle ear, prevent fluid accumulation, and reduce the frequency of ear infections.

The procedure is usually performed under general anesthesia, especially in children, to ensure that the patient remains still and comfortable. The surgeon makes a small incision (myringotomy) in the eardrum (tympanic membrane). A tiny tube, usually made of plastic, is inserted into the incision to keep it open, allowing air to enter the middle ear and fluid to drain out. The procedure is usually quick, about 10-15 minutes. The tubes stay in place for several months to a few years and usually fall out on their own as the eardrum heals. Follow-up visits are usually every 6 to 12 months and a hearing test (audiogram) may be needed to check the hearing.

### **Preoperative instructions:**

- Medications:
  - Medications: Continue taking your usual medications unless your doctor tells you otherwise.
  - Antibiotics: If prescribed, take the antibiotics as directed before the procedure.
- Fasting guidelines:
  - Night before surgery: Do not eat solid foods after midnight. Clear liquids (water, apple juice, clear broth) can be given up to 8 hours before surgery.
  - Morning of surgery: Do not eat or drink anything at least 8 hours before the procedure.
- Day of surgery:
  - Dress your child in loose and comfortable clothing.
  - Bring a favorite toy or blanket to comfort your child.
  - Arrive at the hospital or surgical center at the time indicated by the surgical team.
  - Remove any piercings or make up.
- Illness:
  - If you or your child develops a cold, fever, or other illness before the procedure, notify your doctor, as this may affect the timing of the surgery.

### **Postoperative instructions:**

- Pain management:

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Frye Regional Medical Center-- 420 N Center St, Hickory, NC 28601 [\(828\) 315-5000](tel:8283155000)  
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- A mild discomfort or drainage from the ear may occur after the procedure. Over-the-counter pain relievers such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin) can help relieve the discomfort.
- Medications:
  - You may be prescribed ear drops after the procedure. Ear drops are not always required, your surgeon will provide more details.
- Ear protection:
  - In general, keep the ears dry, especially when bathing or swimming. Use ear plugs or a waterproof ear band to prevent water from entering the ear canals if the head is submerged under water.
  - Your doctor may give you more specific instructions on swimming or immersing your ears in water.
- Follow-up:
  - Schedule a follow-up appointment with your doctor to monitor the status of your ears and make sure the tubes are working properly. A hearing test, if indicated, can be performed at the time of the visit.
  - Watch for any signs of infection, such as persistent drainage, pain, or fever, and contact your doctor if they occur.
- Activity:
  - Most patients can resume normal activities the day after surgery.
- Tube displacement:
  - Eardrum tubes usually fall out on their own after 18 to 24 months. Your doctor will monitor this and determine if more treatment is needed.

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