
David S. Oliver, MD, FACS, FAAAA

HOME CARE AFTER MYRINGOTOMIES AND TUBES

MEDICATION: Use ear drops as directed: 4 drops in the right left both ear(s) 2 times a day for _____ days, stop _____. The prescribed drops will not burn, although many children will protest while they are restrained and the drops are instilled. Keep these remaining drops for possible future use. Never use numbing drops or other drops that may contain alcohol, as they will cause severe burning.

BLEEDING: Blood or drainage from the ears can occur for several days after surgery. If excessive drainage or crusting develops at the outer ear, clean the outer ear carefully with a Q-tip. Then clean with a Q-tip dipped in hydrogen peroxide. Finally, dry the ear with a third Qtip before instilling ear drops. If any drainage or bleeding occurs after the first postoperative checkup, notify Dr. Oliver promptly.

PAIN/FEVER: Tylenol can be given every 3 to 4 hrs to relieve any postoperative pain or fever. Normal recovery is expected by the evening of surgery.

If a runny nose begins, start an antihistamine or decongestant immediately (Mucinex, Sudafed, Dimetapp, Benadryl, Claritin, Zyrtec, or others that may be prescribed). If a runny nose becomes discolored, see Dr. Oliver or your family doctor/ pediatrician.

Teething and other illnesses in small children can cause a child to pull at the ears. Ear pain may be caused by an ear infection if the tube becomes blocked. If the tube is functioning, the infected ears will eventually drain thick fluid or blood. If drainage recurs, an office visit is recommended, as the ears may need to be cleaned, cultured, and started on antibiotic drops.

ACTIVITIES: While the tubes are in place and functioning, the ears will need to be protected when bathing, shampooing, or swimming. Ear plugs are necessary only if the ears are exposed to direct water pressure in a bathtub or shower, by diving into a swimming pool or swimming more than a depth of 3 feet. Anytime swimming in a natural body of water (creek, lake, ocean, pond, etc.), ear plugs should be used.

The tubes will eventually migrate out of the eardrum, into the ear canal, and exit with earwax between six months and two years after the insertion of the tubes. The tubes may take additional time to move slowly out of the ear canal and may need to be removed in the office. If the tube remains embedded in the eardrum for up to three years, it may need operative removal.

Periodic checkups are necessary to ensure the tubes are functioning well. The first visit should be within two weeks of surgery and every six months until the tubes are out of the eardrum and the eardrums have completely healed. Regular checkups may be necessary for up to three years to ensure that there are no signs of complications.