



Ear Tube Care Sheet

Thank you for trusting us with the care of your child. Now that you have decided ear tubes are the next step in improving your child's health, here is everything you need to know about the surgery, what to expect after surgery and caring for ear tubes in the future.

How long does surgery take?

It takes Dr. Sipp about 5-10 minutes to place the ear tubes in both ears. Your child will be put to sleep with general anesthesia given through a mask. Rarely does a child need an IV or a breathing tube for just ear tubes.

Does it hurt?

Because your child will be asleep under anesthesia, they will not feel any pain during the surgery. When they wake up from surgery, they may have a dull ear ache that can be treated with Tylenol or Motrin.

What if my child has an ear infection on the day of surgery?

That's okay! Most children who get ear tubes won't have totally healthy or clear ears on the day of surgery. The best thing for an ear infection is for Dr. Sipp to place the ear tubes in your child's ear to clear up the infection. However, anesthesia will not let your child undergo surgery if they have wheezing on the day of surgery that does not resolve with a breathing treatment or if they have had croup, bronchitis or the flu in the last two weeks. If your child has had a recent pneumonia, anesthesia will postpone surgery for 8 weeks.

What will my child be like after surgery?

Most children are fussy and sometimes a little delirious for about 20 minutes after surgery from the anesthesia. Once you go home and they get to eat something and/or take a nap, they usually bounce back to normal within a couple of hours. Some children will remain fussy or irritable the rest of that day. Dr. Sipp recommends giving Tylenol and Motrin the first 24 hours after surgery as some children will have a dull ear ache from the ear tube surgery.

Do I need to use ear drops after surgery?

Yes. Dr. Sipp will give you a prescription for Ciprodex ear drops and wants you to put 4-5 drops in each ear twice a day for 5 days after surgery to keep the tubes cleared from any blood or drainage. If Ciprodex drops are too costly, please call our office and ask for an alternative ear drop. Never use over the counter ear drops or swimmer's ear drops in the ears while your child has ear tubes. They will burn like crazy because of the alcohol in them!

Can my child take a bath after surgery?

Dr. Sipp recommends skipping a bath the day of surgery, but you can resume normal bathing the very next day.

When can my child return to school?

Most children are ready to resume school or daycare the very next day after surgery.

When do I follow up after surgery?

We like to see you in our office 4-6 weeks after surgery for your post-op visit. At that visit, we examine the ear tubes to ensure they are in place and dry. We also perform a post-op hearing test. After your initial post-op visit, we will see you every 6 months until the tubes come out and we can ensure your child's ears are staying healthy without ear tubes.

How long do ear tubes last?

Most ear tubes will stay in the ear drum for 12-18 months. If they come out before that, we watch the ears closely to see if ear infections return. About 15% of children who get ear tubes will go on to need another set if they continue to have ear infections after the first set falls out. If the tubes do not come out on their own after about 3-4 years, we may have to discuss surgically removing the ear tubes. There is only about a 2% chance that the tubes will come out too soon (before 1 year) or stay in too long (longer than 3 years).

Can my child go swimming with ear tubes?

Yes. Most children can swim and bathe normally without the use of ear plugs to protect the tubes. If your child is very sensitive to getting water in their ears, it is okay to wear ear plugs, but it is not a requirement. Bath water and swimming pools are usually treated water that pose less of a risk of causing an infection. We worry a little more about swimming in lakes and ocean water with ear tubes. Your child could experience ear drainage from the tubes after swimming in a lake or ocean. In that case, you would treat the ears with Ciprodex drops twice a day x 5-7 days until the drainage is gone. Dr. Sipp is also okay with using his famous 3% Boric acid drops in the ears every night before bed after a busy day of swimming. If you are interested in ear plugs, we recommend Mack's Silicone Putty plugs that are available at most drug or big retail stores.

What do I do if I see drainage from the ears?

Ear drainage is normal the first few days after surgery. The Ciprodex drops should resolve the drainage after using them twice a day for 5-7 days. After surgery, any time you see drainage from the ears, this is what we call an ear infection with ear tubes. The drainage can look like pus, mucous, blood or a mixture of the three. It can also smell bad. Start Ciprodex drops or Dr. Sipp's famous 3% Boric acid drops twice a day for 7 days. If you are still seeing drainage from the ears after 7 days, call our office to schedule an appointment for us to evaluate the ears. Most ear infections resolve with ear drops, but occasionally, we do have to culture the ear drainage or add an oral antibiotic to resolve the drainage.

Do I use Ciprodex or Boric acid for ear drainage?

Either one! Whichever you have on hand. Dr. Sipp is comfortable with you using prescription Ciprodex drops or his famous 3% Boric acid drops twice a day for 7 days to treat ear drainage. Boric acid is safe to use on the entire family to prevent swimmer's ear infections after swimming in the summer. If you run out of ear drops or do not have any refills on file at your pharmacy, call our office and we are happy to call in a new prescription or leave a bottle of Boric acid at the front desk for you to pick up.