

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW: EAR TUBES

What is an ear tube? (tympanostomy tubes, bilateral myringotomy and tubes)

An ear tube is a small tube inserted through the ear drum during surgery. It helps drain fluid and equalize pressure in the ear by letting a little air through to the other side of the ear drum. Ear tubes last between six months and two years and can be replaced if needed.

Why does my child or youth need this surgery?

There are two main reasons your child may need ear tubes:

1. Hearing loss and fluid in the ear

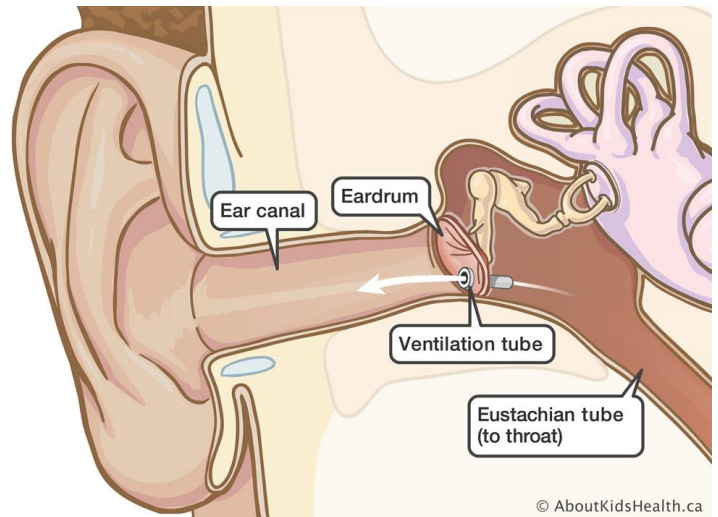
In some children, the Eustachian tube (which connects the ear to the nose) is not working properly. This causes fluid to build up in the ear and can interfere with hearing. Tubes will drain this fluid and equalize the pressure until the Eustachian tube grows and starts to work properly.

2. Recurrent problematic ear infections

How to prepare for surgery

You should start preparing at least one week before your child's scheduled surgery date. Follow the instructions below and carefully read the *Preparing for surgery* booklet for more detailed information.

1. Give acetaminophen (Tylenol® or Tempra®) and over-the-counter cold medications or antibiotics as needed or prescribed.
2. Tell your doctor if your child bruises easily, or if anyone in your family has had problems with anesthetic or bleeding tendencies.
3. Follow the diet and fasting instructions outlined in the *Preparing for surgery* booklet.



What happens during surgery?

On the day of the surgery you will meet with your child's surgeon, anesthesia and nursing team. They will ensure your child is well enough to participate in the surgery and confirm you have followed the preparation instructions.

Ear tube surgery only takes 10-15 minutes and children are usually placed under general anesthesia. Your child will stay in hospital between 30 minutes and two hours after surgery.

What are the risks?

Your child or youth's surgeon will recommend surgery because the benefits outweigh the risks.

Risks include:

- risks of general anesthesia
- infection
- persistent perforation (hole) in ear drum after tube falls out
- hearing loss
- tubes usually fall out on their own between six months and two years, in some cases they do not and require another procedure to remove them after 2-3 years.
- some children need multiple sets of tubes due to ongoing ear problems after tubes fall out

How to take care of your child or youth after surgery

It takes most children 1-3 days to recover after ear tube surgery.



Pain

Some children have mild pain for a few days after surgery.

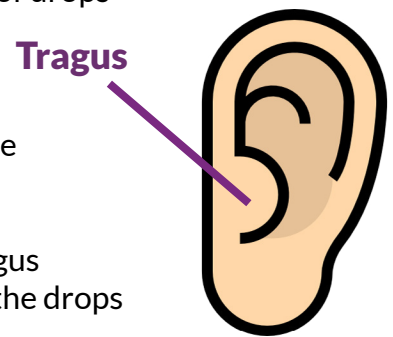
Medication

Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) and/or ibuprofen is usually enough to relieve pain. Do not give more than five doses in a 24 hour period.



Your doctor may prescribe CiproDex® drops. Keep the bottle of drops in case your child gets an ear infection later on. These drops may sting a little. If your doctor prescribes these drops:

1. Place four drops in each ear with tubes, twice a day for the recommended amount of days.
2. 'Pump' each ear by pressing gently a few times on the tragus (cartilage in front of the ear) after giving the drops. This helps the drops move through the tube and keep it open.
3. Continue using the drops as long as your doctor tells you to.





Drainage and bleeding

A small amount of blood or pink drainage is normal after ear tube surgery. Drainage that lasts longer than five days could indicate an infection. Restart the CiproDex® drops if you have them and call your surgeon's office.



Hearing

Some children and youth complain of loud noises or echoing after surgery. This is normal and will go away by itself.



Nausea and vomiting

Your child might have nausea and vomiting after general anesthetic. This should get better within a few hours. Call your surgeon's office or go to CHEO's Emergency Department if nausea and vomiting lasts for more than 12-24 hours.



Diet

Start giving clear liquids, then a soft diet and start a normal diet as soon as your child feels like eating.



Contact with water

Your child should avoid any water in their ears for seven days after surgery. Your doctor may recommend your child use ear plugs for some water activities while the tubes are in place. Cotton balls coated with petroleum jelly or other ear plugs work well. It's a good idea to use ear plugs covered with an Aquaband® if your child will be around dirty water, like lakes, rivers or ponds. Ear plugs are not usually needed for swimming in chlorinated pools, baths or salt water.

Your follow up appointment

If your child or youth requires a follow up appointment, you will be contacted by phone.

Contact information

General inquiries

CHEO ENT clinic nurse
Weekdays 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.
613-737-7600 ext. 2587

ENT on-call doctor
After hours (5 p.m. -8 p.m.) and weekends
613-737-7600 ext. 0 ask for the on-call ENT doctor

CHEO ENT clinic physicians (Drs. Vaccani, MacCormick, Bromwich, Schramm, Rourke)
Weekdays 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.
613-737-7600 ext. 2706

Emergency

In an emergency call Ontario Tele-Health (1-866-797-0000), go to an after hours clinic or to CHEO's Emergency Department.

Community ENT offices

Dr. Chow: 613-759-0417
Dr. Henry 613-562-9000
Dr. McLean: 613-562-9000
Dr. Planet: 613: 746-2235
Dr. Scherer: 613-562-9000



Need more information?

[Cheo.on.ca](http://cheo.on.ca) is the best place to find information on CHEO's programs and services and learn about a variety of health topics for children and youth. Visit our online resource section to access CHEO-recommended websites, books, apps, videos and more!