

Grommets / Ear Tube Surgery

General Information

- After an anaesthetic, it is common to feel groggy for up to 24 hours. Children are often quite disoriented for the first hour or so. Nausea +/- vomiting can also occur. Medication can be given if this is difficult to tolerate. You will not be allowed to drive yourself home after the anaesthetic, or to go home alone. Please arrange for someone to collect you from the hospital and take you home.
- If there is fluid in the ear at the time of the operation, you might notice some 'drippiness' in the first few days. This is commonly mixed with a little bit of blood on the first day.
- Pain is not expected, unless the surgery has been combined with another operation. It is common to have ear pain with tonsil surgery, so this may be one reason you/your child complains of ear pain if these have also been done.
- There are no restrictions in what you can and can't eat after this operation.

Pain Relief/Antibiotics

Your surgeon will provide a prescription for pain relief, or instructions on what to buy from the chemist. Unless another procedure has been done, we don't expect anything beyond mild pain in the first day or so, and commonly no pain at all. Typical types of pain relief include:

- Paracetamol (Panadol, Chemist's Own etc): use this as needed, as your 'first line' pain relief. Make sure you use the dose appropriate for your/your child's weight, rather than purely based on age.
- Anti-inflammatory medication (e.g. ibuprofen): these are quite safe to take after grommet surgery. Talk to your doctor or nurse if other operations have been done at the same time.
- You will often be given eardrops to take if there is fluid or active infection present at the time of your operation. If your surgeon prescribes other medication for you, take them as directed

Activities

- Take the remainder of the day off once you get home from your operation. Sometimes the 'hangover' of the anaesthetic can last through the next day, so anticipate being away from school/work. However, many people feel well enough to get back to regular activities the next day.
- Avoid strenuous exercise (team sports, jogging, heavy weights etc) for two weeks after the operation, and be sensible when you recommence these.
- Children generally are quite sensible about increasing their activity as they recover from their operation, so be guided by their behaviour in terms of what they can do.
- Be careful with driving if you still feel groggy from the anaesthetic the next day.

Water precautions

- Having a grommet in the ear increases the risk of infection if water gets into the ear canal. Therefore, as long as the grommets are in place you will need to keep water out of the ear canals. Avoid head immersion altogether for the first week. After that, earplugs need to be used anytime the head goes/might go completely underwater (e.g. swimming, in the bath if you child likes to put their head underwater). Most adults and children do not need to use precautions when in the shower, providing you keep your head upright when in the shower stream.

Northern Health

185 Cooper Street, Epping 3076
35 Johnstone Street, Broadmeadows 3047

Tel: 03 8405 8000

www.nh.org.au

- Cotton wool covered with Vaseline and sitting in the 'bowl' of the ear is usually fine for adult showers or baths. 'Blutac' makes a great, cheap source of custom made earplugs for most children, and can be helped to stay in place with a headband or swimming cap. Make sure the piece is large enough so it doesn't fall into the canal completely. Commercial earplugs are also available for those that need or prefer them.

When to Seek Medical Advice

- A fever of >38 degrees.
- Worsening discharge from the ears, or new onset of discharge if there was initially none occurring.
- Excessive sedation from pain relief tablets.
- Severe pain, nausea with vomiting, or severe dizziness, especially if it persists for more than a day.
- **Please note that The Northern Hospital does NOT have a permanent ENT doctor present on site. Please do NOT return to our Emergency Department if you need emergency care, as we will need to transfer you elsewhere for this care. Suitable alternatives include The Austin Hospital, Sunshine Hospital or Royal Children's Hospital (children only).**

Follow-Up

You will be booked for a hearing test at The Northern Hospital about 6 weeks after your operation. Please discuss any concerns with your audiologist at that time. An appointment with your surgeon will be made six months after your operation, and again 18 months after surgery. Please see your family doctor between these appointments if you have any concerns.

Contact Details:

Northern Hospital Children's Ward: (03) 8405 8415

Northern Hospital Day Surgical Centre (adults): (03) 8405 8501

Northern Hospital Outpatient Department: (03) 8405 8335

Medical Advice (for emergencies only, please):

- Mon-Fri 8am-4pm: (03) 8405 8000, ask for the 'ENT Registrar On Call'
- After hours: Austin Health (03) 9496 5000, ask for the 'ENT Registrar On Call'

Northern Health

185 Cooper Street, Epping 3076
35 Johnstone Street, Broadmeadows 3047

Tel: 03 8405 8000

www.nh.org.au