

Parents Want To Know: What Are Ear Tubes?

(NAPSA)—Now hear this. Each year, more than half a million ear tube surgeries are performed on children, making it the most common childhood surgery performed with anesthesia.

Inserting ear tubes may:

- reduce the risk of future ear infection,
- restore hearing loss caused by middle ear fluid,
- improve speech problems and balance problems, and
- improve behavior and sleep problems caused by chronic ear infections.

Ear tubes are often recommended when a person experiences repeated middle ear infection (acute otitis media) or has hearing loss caused by the persistent presence of middle ear fluid (otitis media with effusion).

These conditions most commonly occur in children, but can also be present in teens and adults and can lead to speech and balance problems, hearing loss, or changes in the structure of the eardrum.

After surgery, the patient will usually go home within an hour if no complications are present. Patients usually experience little or no post-operative pain but grogginess, irritability and/or nausea from the anesthesia can occur temporarily.

Hearing loss caused by the presence of middle ear fluid is immediately resolved by surgery. Sometimes children can hear so much better that they complain that normal sounds seem too loud.

The otolaryngologist (ear, nose, and throat specialist) will provide specific postoperative instructions



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for each patient including when to seek immediate attention and follow-up appointments. He or she may also prescribe antibiotic eardrops for a few days.

Consultation with an otolaryngologist about ear tubes may be warranted if you or your child has experienced repeated or severe ear infections, ear infections that are not resolved with antibiotics, hearing loss due to fluid in the middle ear, barotrauma, or have an anatomic abnormality that inhibits drainage of the middle ear.

To keep parents better informed about these and other pediatric ear, nose and throat disorders, the American Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery is sponsoring “Kids E.N.T. Health Month” in February 2005.

One of the oldest medical associations in the nation, the organization’s mission is: “Working for the Best Ear, Nose and Throat Care.”

To learn more, visit the Web site at www.entnet.org/kidsENT.