

Grommets or Ear Tube Surgery

For all enquiries:

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ENT North

General Information

- After an anaesthetic, it is common to feel groggy for up to 24 hours. Children are often quite disorientated for the first hour or so. Nausea +/- vomiting can also occur. Medication can be given if this is difficult to tolerate.
- You may 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 advised that this is necessary.
- 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 in the first day.
- We don't expect any pain unless the surgery has been combined with another operation.
- There are no restrictions in what you can and can't eat after this operation.

Pain Relief/Antibiotics

Your surgeon will provide a script 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., Nurofen): 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.
- If your surgeon prescribes antibiotics for you, take them as directed.
- You will often be given eardrops to take if there is fluid or active infection present at the time of your operation.

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 having this off. 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.

Swimming, baths, and showers after grommets

- Recent research has shown that most kids and adults can swim or put their head underwater in clean water (chlorinated swimming pools and baths, NOT rivers/lakes etc.) without the need for ear plugs or other measures to avoid water getting into their ears. We therefore advise that you don't need to use *any* restrictions at all around clean water. Sea water is likely fine as well, although there is not as much evidence to guide us.
- There is absolutely no need to use ear plugs when in showers, tipping water over your head to rinse your hair, running through sprinklers etc. or other situations where head immersion will not occur.
- In some people with grommets, water exposure can lead to discharge from their ear/s, which might look like thin fluid, mucous or pus. If the discharge continues for more than two days, is very smelly, blood-stained or there is associated pain, call the number above and we will arrange an urgent review to assess and treat it.
- If water exposure commonly leads to discomfort or discharge, use ear plugs when putting your head underwater.
- Your child can return to swimming lessons one week after grommet placement.

Ear Discharge after Grommets

- Some fluid leaking from the ears is quite common for the first 2-3 days after grommets are placed, and we will often encourage this to dry up with some topical ear drops.
- If it continues for more than four days, please call the number above or contact your surgeon to let them know. If needed, we'll arrange an early appointment to see if more active treatment is needed.
- If you or your child gets clear or mucous fluid from the ears with colds, mop this out with a tissue twisted into a point (Google 'Tissue Spear' for a demonstration). Call us if it becomes smelly, looks like pus or blood or continues for more than three days. This most commonly happens with colds or sometimes with water getting into the ears.
- It is worth coming back to see your surgeon rather than your family doctor in this circumstance. We can often stop the discharge quickly by cleaning the ears more thoroughly than your family doctor is able to, and starting ear drops rather than needing oral antibiotics.

Flying after Grommets

- Grommets begin to work immediately, so you can fly the next day. There may be restrictions on flying soon after an anaesthetic – please check your travel insurance if travelling out of Australia to see if there are any relevant restrictions that apply to you or your family member.

When to Seek Medical Advice

- A fever of >38degrees.
 - 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.
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- If you need to return to hospital due to post-operative complications, Dr Amott advises that, if possible, both adult and paediatric patients attend Austin Health in Heidelberg. She can care for you there and has access to continuous back-up from other ENT surgeons, the Emergency Department and Operating Theatre, if those services are needed. Most other major metropolitan public hospitals also have emergency ENT services, including Royal Children's Hospital or Sunshine Hospital for paediatric patients specifically. Our other surgeons all have appointments at various public hospitals – please discuss which locations they work at if you do need to present for emergency care.
 - DO NOT PRESENT TO A PRIVATE HOSPITAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT following discharge for any post-operative concerns or symptoms. Our surgeons do not work at these hospitals apart from their designated operative sessions and are unable to provide safe care for you at those locations outside your surgical admission.

Please call your surgeon for advice if any of the above occur, or if you have any other concerns.

Follow-Up

- Your ENT Surgeon will make an appointment to see you about one month after your operation, and we will coordinate a hearing test to be done prior to that appointment.
- If you would prefer to go to another audiology service, please let us know and ensure you bring a copy of the result with you to your appointment. It is common for us not to receive the results from external providers in time for your appointment, and we would like to avoid the inconvenience of having to bring you/your child back for another appointment to check the results.