

# Children's Ear Nose & Throat Center

Sub-specialists of Dell Children's Medical Center of Central Texas

A member of the  Seton Healthcare Family

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## Pressure Equalizer (PE) Tube Insertion

Ear tubes are known by several names: tympanostomy tubes, ventilating tubes, pressure equalizing tubes or most frequently, PE tubes. They are tiny hollow tubes made of a soft material. PE tubes decrease the frequency of ear infections by allowing air in and helping fluid to drain into the throat. Preventing fluid from staying in the middle ear can help to restore and preserve normal hearing. The small tubes that are used do not cause hearing loss or long term damage to the eardrum.

### During Surgery

PE tubes are inserted under general anesthesia as an outpatient surgery. A microscope is used to see into the ear and a small incision is made in the eardrum. Any fluid or infection present in the middle ear is suctioned and the tube is placed into the incision where it remains without the use of stitches.

### Possible Experiences After Surgery

- Hearing Many children experience an immediate improvement in hearing after the fluid is removed from the middle ear and PE tubes have been inserted. This may cause the child to be frightened by normal sounds because they will seem loud. Children usually adjust quickly to these louder sounds.
- Ear Infections PE tubes will prevent ear infections from developing most of the time. However, some children with tubes develop an ear infection despite the tubes. Children with tubes will usually have drainage from the ear with an infection. The drainage may be clear, yellow, orange, green, brown, pink, or bloody.
- Your doctor will give you a prescription for ear drops to keep on hand. If your child develops ear drainage, use the drops as directed and notify our office the next business day, so that we may update our records. If needed, pain medication such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) may be given. If you do not have a prescription or have run out of drops, call the office nurse during normal office hours (Monday through Friday 9 to 5) for a prescription.

### Follow-up

A postoperative office appointment is needed after surgery and then periodically until the PE tubes are out or until your child no longer has problems with ear infections. During these visits we will check the status of the PE tubes and evaluate the condition of the eardrum. If there are problems or questions, call the office nurse.