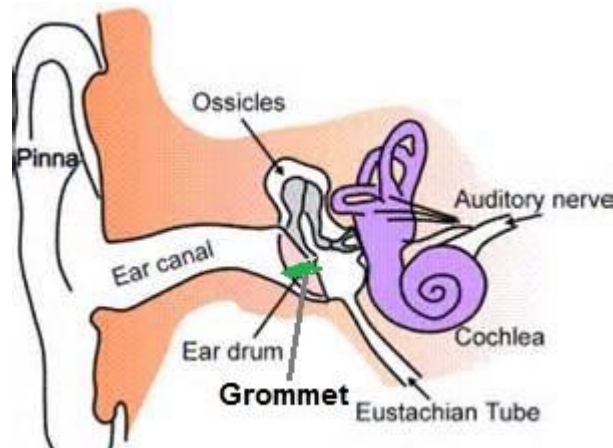




GROMMETS

(Ventilation Tubes for the middle ear)



WHAT IS A GROMMET?

A 'grommet' is also called a 'ventilation tube' or 'tympanostomy tube'. Grommets are small plastic tubes with a hole in the centre. They come in different shapes and sizes. The most commonly used grommet for children looks a bit like a very small old-fashioned cotton reel.

WHAT DOES A GROMMET DO?

The grommet does not cure 'glue ear'. It allows fresh air into the middle ear giving the ear infection a chance to clear up without causing constant hearing problems.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE OPERATION?

- Usually the operation takes place during day surgery.
- The child has a general anaesthetic.
- The eardrum is cut and the fluid behind the eardrum is removed.
- The grommet is placed in the eardrum.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Usually the child's hearing returns to normal levels immediately. While the grommets are in place and not blocked, hearing levels should be normal. The grommets will eventually fall out – the length of time depends on the type of grommet used. Normally 6 – 18 months. The grommet will fall into the ear canal, and comes out of the ear with the wax.

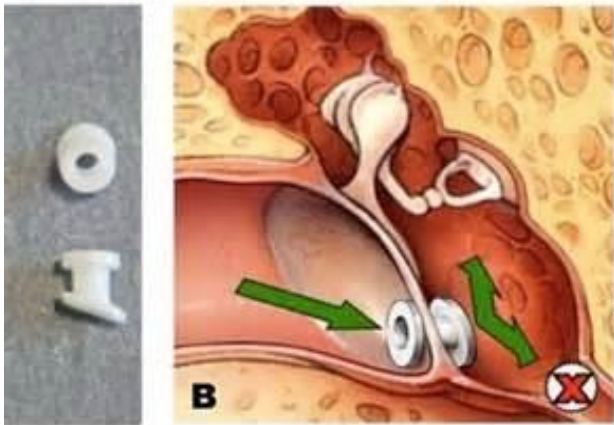
ARE THERE ANY COMPLICATIONS?

Common complications are:

1. Risk of infection if water gets into the middle ear (check with the child's treating specialist regarding keeping ears dry)
2. There is a small risk of perforation of the eardrum, usually by a very large grommet.
3. After the grommet comes out and the eardrum heals, there may be a form of scarring on the eardrum called tympanosclerosis. This does not usually affect hearing.
4. While the grommet is in place, thick middle ear fluid can block the tube. A visit to your doctor may be necessary. Eardrops may be necessary to clear the tube.

WILL ONE SET OF GROMMETS BE ENOUGH?

Sometimes if infection recurs after the grommets fall out, another set may be needed. Your Ear Nose & Throat Specialist will discuss this with you.



WHAT HAPPENS IF NOTHING IS DONE?

Sometimes 'glue ear' resolves without intervention. However if recurrent ear infections persist, and hearing is reduced, young children may not learn to talk properly or may have difficulty learning at school.

The medical conditions that can develop from 'glue ear' may cause permanent damage to parts of the ear and could result in permanent hearing loss.

It is important that you discuss the management of ear disease with your medical practitioner or hearing health professional.

HEARING ASSESSMENTS ARE AVAILABLE AT YOUR LOCAL CENTRE BY APPOINTMENT