

# **Grommet Insertion**

## **Before the operation**

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### **What are grommets?**

Grommets are small plastic tubes which sit in a hole made in the eardrum. They let air get in and out of the ear to keep it dry and healthy.

### **Why do we use grommets?**

Some people get a build up of fluid behind the eardrum. This is sometimes called 'glue ear.' It is very common in young children, but can happen in adults too. We do not know exactly what causes glue ear.

Most young children will have glue ear at some time, but it doesn't always cause problems. We only need to treat it if it is causing problems with hearing or speech, or if it is causing lots of ear infections.

### **How long do grommets stay in for?**

Grommets fall out themselves as the eardrum grows. They may stay in for six months, or a year, or sometimes even longer. You may not notice when they fall out.

### **Does my child have to have grommets?**

Glue ear tends to get better by itself, but this can take a while. We like to leave children alone for the first three months, because about half of them will get better in this time.

After three months, we will see you again in the clinic and decide whether we need to operate.

If the glue ear is not causing any problems, we can just wait for it to settle by itself. If it is causing problems with poor hearing, poor speech, or lots of infections, it may be better to put grommets in.

### **Can anything else help?**

Some doctors may use nose drops or antibiotics to see if they help.

Regular 'popping' of the ears can help in some cases. Children find popping their ears difficult but a device called an 'otovent' can be used by most children for the same 'popping' effect.

Removing the adenoids may help the glue ear to get better, and your surgeon may want to do this at the same time as putting grommets in.

A hearing aid can be used to treat poor hearing and speech problems that are caused by glue ear. This would mean that your child would not need an operation.

### **Can I do anything to help my child?**

Speak clearly and wait for your child to answer. Make sure he or she can see your face when you speak. Call your child's name to get them to look at you before you speak. Let nursery and school teachers know that your child has a hearing problem. It may help for your child to sit at the front of the class.

### **What is involved in the operation?**

During the operation a small hole is made in the eardrums (myringotomy) and the 'glue' is sucked out. The grommets are then inserted into the small hole in the eardrum.

### **Are grommets sore?**

Grommets are not usually sore. Some children may experience discomfort and you can give your child painkillers if needed.

Grommets should improve your child's hearing straight away. Some children think everything sounds too loud until they get used to having normal hearing again.

### **What about ear infections?**

Most people with grommets do not get ear infections. If you see yellow liquid coming out of the ear it may be an infection. It will not be as sore as a normal infection and your child will not be as ill. If you get some ear drops from your own doctor the problem will quickly settle. Some doctors may prefer to give you antibiotics instead of drops.

### **Can my child swim with grommets in?**

Your child can start swimming a couple of weeks after the operation, as long as they don't dive under the water. You don't need to use earplugs as the hole in the grommet is too small to let water through. If the water is dirty or has shampoo or soap in it you have to be more careful, especially in the bath and the shower. Plug your child's ear with a cotton wool ball covered in Vaseline.

### **How long will my child be off school or nursery?**

Your child should be able to get back to normal the day after the operation.

### **Are there any other problems with grommets?**

It is okay to fly in an aeroplane with grommets.

Sometimes when a grommet comes out, a small hole is left behind. This usually heals up with time and we rarely need to operate to close the hole.

**If you have any problems or questions please ask your surgeon.**

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