



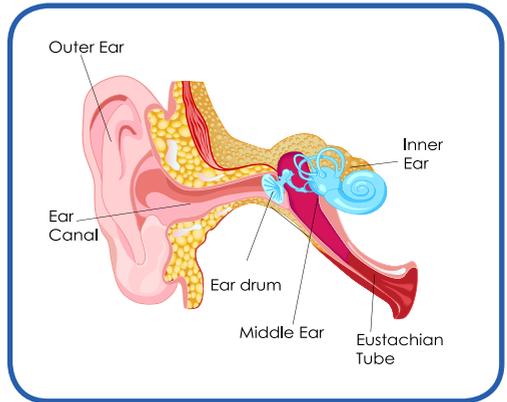
Children's Health Ireland  
at Temple Street

# Information For Parents and Carers About Grommets



## What are Grommets?

Grommets are small plastic tubes which are put into the eardrum. They allow air to flow in and out of the ear which keeps the ear healthy and helps prevent fluid building up behind the eardrum.



## Why does my child need them?

Some people get fluid behind their eardrum. This is called “glue ear”. It is very common in young children. We only need to treat it if it affects hearing or if it causes repeated ear infections.

## How long do they stay in for?

A grommet will stay in for 6 to 12 months and then will fall out as the healing eardrum pushes it out. If the grommet falls out sooner, do not worry. You may not notice the grommets falling out.

Your child will see the ENT doctor or ENT nurse on a regular basis while the grommets are in place.

If the fluid reaccumulates after the grommets have fallen out, we may need to put another set of grommets in, to last until your child grows out of the problem.

## Can I do anything to help my child?

If your child has a hearing problem, speak clearly, and wait for them to answer. Make sure you are looking directly at your child when speaking to them. Inform the school teacher that your child has a hearing problem. It may help if your child sits at the front of the class

## **Before my child's operation**

Inform the ENT department if your child develops a sore throat, cold sore or high temperature in the week before their surgery. Also inform the ENT department if they have been in contact with a child or adult with measles, mumps, or chickenpox as it will be safer to cancel surgery for three weeks. Avoid giving your child any vaccinations 48 hours before surgery.

## **What will be my child's length of hospital stay?**

Your child's operation will be carried out under a general anaesthetic. Grommet insertion is a day procedure and once your child is eating and drinking they will be discharged home the same day if they feel well.

## **Risks of insertion of Grommets**

Sometimes children develop a discharge from their ear after grommet insertion. This is usually treated with antibiotic eardrops or an oral antibiotic. If the discharge does not stop the grommet may need to be removed. This is rare. If your child develops discharge from their ears after grommet insertion please let your GP know.

Hole in the eardrum. After the grommet falls out, the hole in the eardrum usually heals up. Sometimes the hole in the eardrum does not heal and another operation is required to repair the hole.

The grommets may have to be put back. This may be required if the grommets have fallen out and your child's ear infections or decreased hearing return.

Scarring of the eardrum. A thin, weakened eardrum or a thickened eardrum may develop. This usually does not interfere with hearing unless it is very severe.

Failure to improve hearing.

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

Your child should be able to return to school or crèche the following day, provided they are feeling well following their anaesthetic.

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

Your child can return to swimming three weeks after grommet insertion, but extreme care should be taken. Ideally, they should use earplugs and a rubber swimming cap/ear band. If water gets into the grommets, an infection can occur, so it is essential to keep the ears as dry as possible. Your child should not dive or swim underwater.

### **Can my child fly after their operation?**

Your child can fly after the grommets have been inserted.

### **Out Patients Appointment**

We will check your child's hearing after the grommets have been inserted. This will be done when your child returns to the clinic three months following their operation.



**Following your child's treatment in hospital please follow the advice below**

After inserting the grommet there may be a discharge which may be blood-stained for a day or two. This should clear up within 2-3 days. If the discharge continues or if your child complains of persistent ear pain or bleeding please contact the ENT Department.

It is important not to allow water into your child's ears. When bathing or washing hair, first place a plug of cotton wool covered with Vaseline in the opening of their ear canal. Do not put your child's head underwater. Continue this until advised otherwise by the ENT team.

If your child develops a cold during the two weeks immediately following their operation, contact your own GP as they may need an antibiotic.

Do not clean inside your child's ear.

Some children may hear crackling, popping and other such noises after their operation. This will pass after a short time.

Any pain or discomfort your child may have when they go home should be short-lived and relieved by paracetamol (Calpol).

Your child may be prescribed eardrops following surgery. If ear drops are required, ask for our leaflet explaining the best technique.

## **ENT Consultants**

Professor Helena Rowley

Professor Michael Colreavy

Mr Stephen Kieran

Ms Eimear Phelan

Ms Ann O'Connor

Ms Colleen Heffernan

## **ENT Nurse Specialists**

Mairead O'Leary, Kathy Roche, Dorothy Goslin, Jackie Howard, Heather Lehane

## **Contact Details**

Direct number between 8am-4pm 01 8784318 or 01 878  
4200 Bleep 785 Outside these hours contact your local  
Emergency Department

or

D-Doc Monday -Friday 6pm - 8am Saturday, Sunday and  
Bank Holidays Open 24 hours 1850 22 44 77



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The information contained in this leaflet is correct at time of print