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Myringotomy and Insertion of Tympanostomy Tubes (PE Tubes, Pressure Equalizing Tubes)

Myringotomy with or without tympanostomy tube insertion is the most commonly performed ear operation. It is extremely safe and effective. Complications are minor and usually in the form of infection, which may be treated with antibiotics.

The tube usually remains in place for several months, although it may be rejected sooner or remain in place for years. As long as there is a tube in the ear, care should be taken to avoid water contamination, especially bath water, by the use of ear plugs or, if desired, a bathing cap.

Occasionally the tympanic membrane fails to heal after tubes have been removed, and the resulting perforation may require surgical repair. In some cases, particularly when there is a family history of chronic ear disease, tympanostomy tubes may need to be replaced.

Hearing improvement is usually immediate after fluid has been removed from the ear. Failure to improve hearing indicates a second problem in the middle or inner ear.