

Insertion of Grommets

Dr David Wabnitz MBBS, MS, FRACS

Pain Relief

Any pain is usually well controlled by Paracetamol or Ibuprofen (Nurofen), and pain relief may be required for the first 24 hours if required at all.

Fluid from the Ear

Antibiotic ear drops are often placed into the ear canal during surgery, and any cotton wool that has been placed into the opening of the ear canal can be discarded once the child has returned to the ward. It is not unusual for a small amount of blood to be seen coming out of the ear on the day of surgery. Antibiotic ear drops are often prescribed for a number of days after the operation. This is done to encourage the tube to remain open, to settle any inflammation within the middle ear, and/or to decrease the risk of ongoing discharge from the ear.

Return to Normal Activities

As a day procedure, all patients having grommets should be observed for 24 hours. Most children can return to day care or school once they have fully recovered from the anaesthetic, usually on the day after surgery.

Aeroplane Travel

This is often possible within a few days after surgery. The grommets will protect the ears from any pressure-related pain.

Hearing Loss

Any hearing loss that was caused by fluid in the middle ear has usually resolved immediately following the insertion of grommets.

Occasionally children may complain that noises are too loud for them, as they hear sound normally for the first time for some time!

Follow Up Appointments

Patients are usually seen 4 weeks following surgery. Follow-up appointments are then scheduled on a 6 monthly basis until the grommets fall out and it can be confirmed that the ears have been restored back to health. You may or may not see the grommets when they fall out.

A post-operative hearing test may be required to ensure that any hearing loss that was present prior to the operation has resolved and that there is no underlying nerve-related hearing loss.

Further Grommets

Of all children who have grommets, about 1 in 4 will require another set of grommets after the first set have fallen out – due to a recurrence of middle ear infections or reaccumulation of middle ear fluid.

Where a repeat operation is required, it is often combined with removal of the adenoids (Adenoidectomy) as this tends to improve ear health and reduces the need for further grommet insertions.