

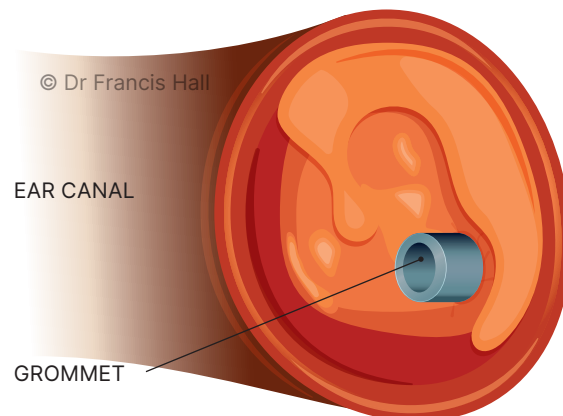


Dr. *Francis* T. Hall

EAR, NOSE, THROAT, HEAD & NECK

## Grommet care

Grommets are little plastic tubes that sit in the ear drum. Grommets are also called ventilation tubes. The ear drum is also called the tympanic membrane. Grommets work by allowing air to enter the middle ear. In children they are put in under general anaesthesia (they are fast asleep). In adults they are usually put in under local anaesthesia.



Grommets are put in if:

- There is fluid in the middle ears (glue ear) that won't go away. The medical term for glue ear is otitis media with effusion (OME).
- In some people with recurrent middle ear infections (recurrent acute otitis media)
- In some people who have difficulty equalising when flying.

Inserting grommets is a simple short operation. The anaesthetist gives a light general anaesthetic and rather than passing a tube down into your child's windpipe the anaesthetist holds a mask over their mouth and nose. Dr Hall cleans out any wax from the ear canals and makes a small incision in the ear drum. He sucks out the fluid and mucus from the middle ear and inserts a grommet into the ear drum. Antibiotic ear drops are placed in each ear canal. The anaesthetist wakes your child up. This care sheet gives you a general idea about how long it will take to recover. But each person recovers at a different pace. Follow the steps below to feel better as quickly as possible.

## What to expect?

The recovering from grommets is very fast and most children are back at school the following day. The ears may feel a little funny and different for a few days.

## How can you care for yourself at home?

### Activity:

- Most children can go back to school the following day.
- Resume your normal diet the same day.

### Pain medicines:

- Dr Hall or his anaesthetist will prescribe paracetamol (Panadol).

## Ear drops:

- Many patients are also prescribed ear drops for 5-7 days after grommet surgery. Some patients are prescribed eye drops to put in their ears!
- The drops need to be kept at room temperature and may be warmed by holding the bottle in your hand for a few minutes prior to administering them.
- You may notice a strange taste with the ear drops, this is normal.
- To put in ear drops:
  - lie down,
  - pull the ear back,
  - put in the recommended number of ear drops,
  - let go of the ear,
  - pump the little piece of cartilage (called the tragus) in front of the ear a few times,
  - keep lying down for 5-10 minutes,
  - then repeat on the other side.

## Water and swimming:

- Dr Hall advises you to keep the ears dry and avoid swimming for one week after having grommets inserted.
- Swim on the surface of the water, do not dive or swim under the water. Water may pass through your ear canal, through your grommet and into your middle ear causing an ear infection. If the water is cold, the cold water in the middle ear may cause vertigo (a spinning sensation) which can be very dangerous if you are in the water.
- Most people with grommets are safe swimming on the surface of the water, some people get an ear infection and may need to stop swimming.
- Swimming in thermal pools and spa pools should be avoided as bacteria multiply in hot water and the risk of getting an ear infection is greater.
- If you go swimming and get an ear infection, see your family doctor or arrange to see Dr Hall for a prescription for antibiotic ear drops.
- If you still want to go swimming after getting an ear infection, try ear plugs which you can get from your pharmacy. There are a variety of ear plugs, just pick one and try it. If it works great, if it doesn't try a different ear plug.
- You can also get custom made ear plugs from an audiologist (someone who does hearing tests). They are more expensive but are usually better at keeping water out of your ears.
- If you wear ear plugs, stay on the surface of the water. Diving may result in the ear plug being pushed into your ear drum and middle ear.

## Problems:

Both of the problems below can occur even if you don't have grommets. Patients with recurrent ear infections may get a discharging ear or a hole in the ear drum even without grommets.

- Discharge from the ear. Not surprisingly some ears discharge after surgery. Dr Hall frequently prescribes ear drops for 5 to 7 days after grommet surgery to help stop the ears from discharging.
  - Ears can discharge at any stage with a grommet in place. If you have discharge from your ear, call Dr Hall's office for a prescription for antibiotic ear drops. If the ear does not stop discharging within one week, make an appointment to see Dr Hall to have the ear cleaned out under the microscope.

- A hole in the ear drum. Grommets last between 6 and 12 months. As the ear drum grows it carries the grommet with in and usually after 6-12 months the grommet falls out. Sometimes, not often (about 2% of patients), the ear drum may not heal fully where the grommet has been and a hole (perforation) in the ear drum may result. This is not always a bad thing as a hole acts as a permanent grommet.
  - With a hole in the ear drum the ear is not water proof and water can enter the middle ear. For this reason, Dr Hall advises patients with a hole in the ear drum to stop swimming and keep the ear dry when showering.
  - If you are one of the unlucky patients who end up with a hole in the ear drum, don't despair, it can usually be fixed with a second operation called a myringoplasty.

#### **Follow up appointment:**

- Dr Hall usually sees his grommets patients about 9 months after surgery.
- Of course, if you have problems or would like to see Dr Hall earlier, please call his secretary Rebecca on 09 281 2963 and she will arrange an earlier appointment for you.

**Any problems call or text Dr Francis Hall on 021 733 677**

Dr.  T. Hall