

# Grommet/Tympanostomy Tube (T-Tube) Insertion in adults

Day Surgery Unit



Patient information leaflet

This leaflet will provide you with information on Grommet Insertion and any after care required. If you have any further questions or if there is anything you do not understand, please feel free to ask any of the nurses or your doctor.

## **What are Grommets?**

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A Grommet is a small tube (either plastic or metal), approximately 2mm in length, which allows air to enter the middle ear, preventing fluid build-up. The choice of material would depend on how long the Grommet is to stay in place. Grommets will normally stay in place for a year, however they may fall out before this.

## **What is a Tympanostomy Tube?**

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A Tympanostomy Tube, also known as a T-Tube, is approximately 12 mm in length and usually made of silicon rubber. T-Tubes also allow air to enter the middle ear but are usually inserted when long-term ventilation is required. T-Tubes may remain in the eardrum for 24 months or longer.

Grommets are usually used first in the treatment of fluid behind the eardrum (glue ear) or severe retraction pocket within the eardrum. They are occasionally used to try to benefit patients with severe dizziness due to Meniere's disease. T-Tubes are used when longer ventilation is required.

## **Why do I have fluid behind my ear drum?**

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The Eustachian tube (a tube that connects the back of the nose with the middle ear) allows air to enter into the middle ear. This tube helps to keep the pressure behind the ear drum the same as the air around the head. Unfortunately this does not always work properly and this can often cause a build-up of fluid in the middle ear.

## How are Grommets/T-Tubes inserted?

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The operation can be performed either by local anaesthetic or a general anaesthetic. The surgeon will make a small hole in the ear drum and remove the fluid by suction. The Grommet/T-Tube will then be placed in the hole.

## What are the alternatives?

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Glue ear will usually get better by itself. However if the symptoms persist for longer than three months and is causing problems such as repeated ear infections or poor hearing, then surgery is recommended. Your doctor will advise you on the most appropriate course of action.

## What are the risks?

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- Infection.
- Blockage – the grommet may become blocked due to wax, stale blood or discharge.
- The grommet may fall out earlier than predicted and may need to be reinserted.
- The hole in your eardrum heals by itself, however it may persist and need repair.
- Hearing loss – this is highly unlikely but may be permanent.
- Tinnitus – noises in the ear should occur for a short period, if at all, however this could be permanent.
- Dizziness – this may be due to variation in air temperature during the procedure and should resolve.

## How long is the operation?

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The operation itself will only take 10–15 minutes per ear. However please be advised that if your appointment time is 07:30, your operation will take place between 08:30 and 12:30.

If your appointment time is 12:30 your operation will be between 13:30 and 17:00.

We aim to keep waiting times to a minimum, however, some delays are unavoidable. The nursing staff will try to keep you informed of times on the day.

## After the operation

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After the procedure you will be transferred back to the ward. You will usually be able to go home the same day. If the procedure has been completed using a local anaesthetic, you will only be required to remain on the unit for approximately 30 minutes. However if you have had a general anaesthetic, you will need to remain for one hour. Nursing staff can provide patients with refreshments as required.

**Following a general anaesthetic you must have a responsible adult to escort you home and to stay with you for at least 24 hours afterwards.**

## Will it be painful?

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This procedure is not usually painful. Nursing staff will advise on pain relief when you are discharged.

## Returning to normal activities

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The aftercare for Grommets and T-Tubes are the same.

- Keep your ear dry and do not bath or shower for 4–6 weeks.
- Avoid swimming for 4–6 weeks.
- Take it easy and avoid strenuous exercise for the rest of the day.
- Continue with your regular medications as required.
- You may fly on an aeroplane after insertion of Grommets/T-Tube.

If you have had a general anaesthetic, for the following 24 hours you **MUST NOT**:

- Drive or operate any heavy machinery.
- Drink alcohol
- Sign any legal or important documents, or make any important decisions.
- Return to work. Please advise nursing staff if you require a sick note.

## Follow up appointments

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The time and date of any follow up appointments will be sent to you through the post.

Your GP will be informed of your procedure by letter.

## Reference sources

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- [www.fauquierent.blogspot.com/2015/06/types-of-ear-tubes.html](http://www.fauquierent.blogspot.com/2015/06/types-of-ear-tubes.html)
- [www.earcentergreensboro.com/medical-education/ear\\_tubes.php](http://www.earcentergreensboro.com/medical-education/ear_tubes.php)
- [www.spiggle-theis.com/en/products/otology/ventilation-tubes/t-tubes](http://www.spiggle-theis.com/en/products/otology/ventilation-tubes/t-tubes)
- [www.entuk.org](http://www.entuk.org)
- [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)



## Contact details

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For further information or advice, please do not hesitate to contact us.

### Day Surgery Unit

**Telephone:** 01483 406783 (Monday–Friday, 08.30–19.30)

### Surgical Short Stay Unit

**Telephone:** 01483 406828

### Out of hours advice

**Telephone:** Call 111 (formerly NHS Direct)

**Website:** [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)

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## PALS and Advocacy contact details

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Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

**Telephone:** 01483 402757

**Email:** [rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net)

**Opening hours:** 9.00am–3.00pm, Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

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