

Fluid in middle ear

Use this grid to help you and your healthcare professional talk about what to do if your child has fluid in the middle ear.

Frequently asked questions	Grommets	Hearing aid	Watchful waiting
What does it involve?	Placing a small tube into the eardrum to reduce build-up of fluid that causes hearing problems.	Fitting a device that sits behind the ear to make sounds easier to hear.	Checking hearing in clinic every 3 to 6 months.
How long does the treatment take?	The operation takes about 10 minutes. Your child will go home the same day.	Fitting takes about an hour. There are follow up visits every few weeks until hearing improves or other treatment is tried.	Regular check ups until hearing comes back to normal.
How long does it take to recover?	Less than 24 hours.	Fitting is simple - no recovery needed.	Does not apply.
What is the risk of the treatment itself?	There is a very small risk of serious problems occurring due to the anesthesia.	No risk.	No risk.
What are the potential disadvantages?	Ear pain and mild bleeding may occur. 3 in 100 children (3%) will have a hole in the eardrum that needs surgery. About 25 in 100 children (25%) will get a treatable infection.	It may take your child a week or two to adjust to the hearing aid.	Hearing will not improve in the short-term. Long-term hearing difficulty can cause developmental problems if not corrected.
What usually happens in the long term?	Most grommets fall out in about a year. About 20 in 100 children (20%) will need more grommets.	Hearing aids are used as long as needed or until another treatment is tried.	Hearing comes back on its own or another treatment is tried.
How will it affect my child's hearing?	Hearing will normally improve in the short-term. After 6 months, there is no clear difference between treatment options.	Hearing will normally improve in the short-term. After 6 months, there is no clear difference between treatment options.	Hearing will not improve in the short-term. However, after 6 months there is no clear difference between treatment options.
How will it affect my child's development?	It depends on the child and his or her condition.	It depends on the child and his or her condition.	It depends on the child and his or her condition.
Can my child take baths or swim?	Baths and swimming are fine, but avoid diving.	The hearing aid should be removed before bathing or swimming.	Baths and swimming are fine.

Editors: Chris Calkins, Ben Cosway, Nan Cochran, Giri Venkatraman, Glyn Elwyn.

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