

Information on Myringotomy and Tube Placement

Middle Ear:

The space behind your eardrum is called the middle ear (ME). The ME is connected to the back of the nose by the Eustachian tube. The Eustachian tube is a thin tube lined by tissue similar to your nasal cavity. The Eustachian tube may become swollen and blocked by several causes: e.g. viruses, allergies, tobacco smoke, and sinus infections. This blockage may lead to fluid formation in the ME (behind the eardrum). This fluid limits the eardrum's vibration and, consequently, may reduce your hearing as much as foam ear plugs.

This hearing loss commonly causes speech delay in children. This fluid may also lead to frequent ear infections (otitis media). Lancing the eardrum and placing a small tube in the eardrum (myringotomy and tube placement) can help decrease both the hearing loss and the frequency of infections. After the tube is placed, the fluid may drain out of the ME for a few days, and the hearing should rapidly improve during that time.

Also, by removing the fluid and decreasing the likelihood of its recurrence, the number of ear infections may be greatly reduced. The tube is eventually extruded over time into the ear canal, and the eardrum closes behind it. Occasionally the eardrum does not close over the hole, and the patient may require a procedure to close the hole. Most tubes last 6–18 months.

