

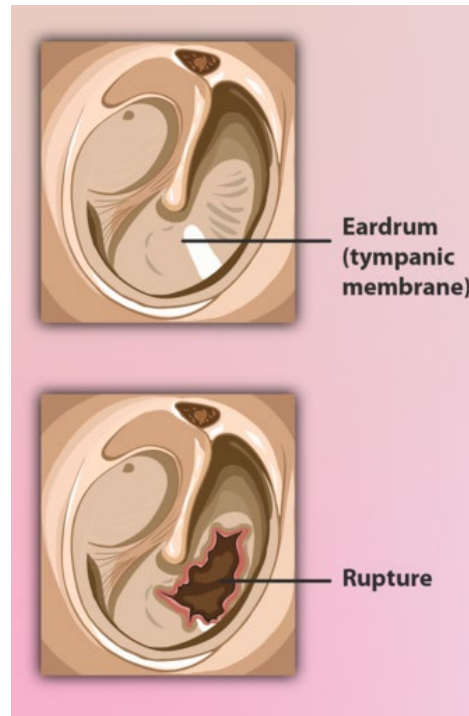
Care Before and After Your Ear Perforation Repair

What is an ear perforation?

An **ear perforation** is a hole or tear in your eardrum. Your **eardrum** (or **tympanic membrane**) is the thin tissue that separates your outer ear from your middle ear.

Eardrums can **rupture** (break or tear) for no clear reason or from other causes like:

- Trauma (loud noises or physical contact)
- Middle ear infection (otitis media)
- Barotrauma (damage caused by pressure, like from scuba diving or traveling by airplane)



Ear perforations can also happen when the eardrum does not heal after a surgery, such as an ear tube placement or graft site repair from another surgery.

An ear perforation can cause hearing loss and place the ear at higher risk for infection.

How can I treat an ear perforation?

If an ear perforation is not healing on its own, you may need a procedure or surgery to repair (fix) the rupture. Read through some possible options below that the surgeon will discuss with you.

- **Paper patch:** This is a special paper is made from thin and lightweight "rag fibers" (non-wood plant fibers) such as flax, hemp, sisal, rice straw, and esparto. It can be left in the ear and it will dissolve over time.
- **Gelfoam® sponge:** This sponge material helps form a clot over the hole or tear. It is usually wetted with either thrombin or saline fluid. It can be left in the ear and your body will absorb it in 4-6 weeks.
- **Fat graft:** This is a method where the doctor takes a piece of fat from your ear lobe and places it through the perforation (like a plug in the hole). This fat graft will be absorbed naturally by your body over time. The ear lobe where the fat was taken from will have dissolvable sutures (stitches) in place that last 7-10 days.

What do I need to buy before my procedure?

- Vaseline® (petroleum jelly)
- Cotton balls
- Ear drops (if you get a prescription from your doctor before the procedure)

What are my instructions before my procedure?

- If you are getting a paper patch or Gelfoam® sponge, we will do this in a clinic as an outpatient procedure. Because of this, you don't need to do any special preparations. You can eat, drink, and take your medications normally.
- If you are getting a fat graft, you will have some preparations to do for the surgery. The surgical team will explain your instructions, including care for your ear after surgery, to you sometime in the 30 days before the procedure. They will also review the information your surgeon shared during your consultation appointment.

What can I expect after the procedure?

Any one of these procedures will improve your ear symptoms. After your procedure, you can expect:

- Less pressure or feelings of fullness in your ear
- Getting your normal hearing back
- Fewer ear infections, which means you will not need as many ear medications
- Less dizziness and less **tinnitus** (ringing noises in your ear)

What foods or drink restrictions do I have after the procedure?

- There are usually no food and drink restrictions after your perforation repair. You can eat and drink normally.
- If your procedure is performed in the surgery center with anesthesia, follow the instructions the surgery team will give you before you leave.

What kind of activities can I do after the procedure?

- It's fine to go back to your normal activities, but avoid any sports or activity that may cause harm to your ear for the first week (7 days) after your procedure.
- Don't blow your nose for 2 weeks after your procedure.
- **For 1 month after your procedure, make sure that no water gets into your ear.**
 - Use a cotton ball covered with a thin coat of Vaseline® in your ear, or use ear plugs, when you shower.
 - Don't do any activities where your ear might go under water, like swimming or using hot tubs.
 - If you have to go outside in the rain, use an umbrella.
- For 6 months after your procedure, use ear plugs whenever your ear will be around water.

- If you are going to be traveling by airplane, talk with your surgeon to make sure your ear will be healed by your travel date.

How will I take care of my surgery sites (the areas on my body where I had my procedure done)?

- Clean your hands before doing any care of your surgery sites.
- If you were prescribed ear drops, use ear drops the day of your procedure as instructed.
 - If the drops seem to be bothering you, try warming them by carrying the bottle in your pocket for about 30 minutes before using them.
 - When using the drops, puddle the drops in the area above your ear canal. Then massage the skin and cartilage in front of your ear canal for 5-10 seconds to help pump the drops into your ear canal.
- You may have **drainage** (fluid leaking from the area, which is sometimes bloody) for several days after your procedure. Keep the skin around your ear clean and dry.
 - If your ear drains fluid which is cloudy, milky, discolored, or smells bad, this could be a sign of an ear infection. Call the office.

How do I manage pain at home?

If you experience pain or discomfort, you can take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Motrin®).

- If you are taking other medications or have other conditions, ask your doctor before taking acetaminophen or ibuprofen.
- Narcotics (opioids, or strong pain management medications) are not typically prescribed.

When can I go back to work?

- If your procedure was done in a clinic, you may go back to work the same day.

- If you had anesthesia during your surgery, then you will have to wait at least 24 hours after your surgery before you go back to work. Depending on your type of work and if you got a fat graft, we may be able to adjust how long you have to be off work after checking with your surgeon.

When should I call the doctor?

Call your doctor if you have any of the following symptoms:

- Fever over 100.4 °F
- Lots of bleeding or smelly drainage from your ear
- Strong itching from your ear
- You can't keep fluids or foods down (you vomit anything you try to eat or drink)
- Strong pain, even after taking pain medications as your doctor or nurse instructed

What is the contact information?

- On Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM: call the Otolaryngology nurses (734) 936-8051 or the pediatric office at (734) 936-5730.
- After hours, on weekends, or on holidays: call hospital paging at (734) 936-6267 and ask for the Otolaryngology (ENT) resident on call for your surgeon.

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