Post-operative Instructions for Tympanoplasty and Tympanomastoidectomy

Medications:
1) Ear drops- Apply ear drops twice daily to the surgical ear starting the day after surgery. Continue these drops until your first post-operative visit, which should be about a week after your surgery.

2) Antibiotics- Start your oral antibiotics the day after surgery. Follow the directions on the medication bottle and continue until complete. A common side effect of antibiotics is loose stools. This should resolve when you finish the medication. Ok to take a probiotic and eat yogurt to help replace the good bacteria into your gut.

3) Pain medications- Take your pain medication on an as need basis. Directions will be on the medication bottle. These medications can cause constipation, tiredness and nausea. Take stool softeners as needed.

Wound care:
1) Glasscock ear dressing- You can remove this the day after surgery. The gauze underneath the Glasscock dressing can all be removed as well. See figure 1.

2) Incision behind ear (if you had a “trans canal” procedure you will not have this) - there will be either surgical glue or thin bandages covering this incision. You need to keep this area dry for the first week after surgery.

3) Cotton ball in the outer ear- Change this cotton ball as needed. The cotton ball will have blood on it for the first few days. This will change to a pink-yellow clear fluid over time. Do not shove the cotton ball into your ear canal. When bathing, remove the dry cotton ball and place a cotton ball rolled in approximately 1 tablespoon of petroleum jelly, the cotton ball should be saturated. Place this over the outer ear. Smooth the edges of the cotton ball down to ensure a water-tight seal. See figure 2.

4) Packing in the ear canal- There is packing in the ear canal, which will be dark in color. It will cause muffled hearing, and ear fullness. Please leave this packing alone. This will be removed by us at your first post-operative visit.

Activity level:
1) Avoid heavy lifting (anything >10 lbs) for the first week.
2) Sneeze with your mouth open

For any questions after your surgery, please call the Ear Institute post-operative phone line to speak with a Registered Nurse. This phone line is available Monday through Friday 8:00am – 4:30pm at 650-863-4267.
For urgent matters after hours or on weekends, please call the Stanford Operator at 650-723-6661, and ask to speak with the ENT resident Doctor on call.

Frequently asked questions

1. How do I apply the ear drops with the packing in place?
   a. Remove the cotton ball from the ear and apply the ear drops directly to the packing in the ear canal. The drops will seep into the packing material, which will help avoid infection and allow for easy removal of the packing. Replace cotton ball after application of ear drops.

2. Why is my ear sticking out?
   a. If you have an incision behind your ear, there may be some swelling causing the ear to stick out. As swelling decreases over a matter of a few weeks, the ear usually moves back into its normal position.

3. Is it okay to wash my hair?
   a. It is okay to wash your hair 3 days after your surgery, provided no water enters the ear (see wound care section on page 1). After 3 days of keeping the incision behind the ear dry, clean gently with your finger, shampoo, and warm water in the shower.

4. How do I remove the surgical glue?
   a. After 5-7 days, providing you are healing appropriately, it is ok to remove the surgical glue behind the ear. The glue is “broken down” by petroleum jelly. Apply the petroleum jelly to the glue and it can be easily peeled off the skin.

5. My ear hurts when I sleep on it. What can I do to help this?
   a. It is okay to sleep on your operative side; if this is uncomfortable you can wear the Glasscock dressing at night. You can also sleep propped up on more pillows.
   b. It is normal to have some ear pain, sensitivity to touch, and ear numbness after surgery. This should improve with time.

6. Is it ok to fly?
   a. It is best to wait 1-2 months after ear surgery before flying due to pressure changes.

7. Why is there is there a funny taste in my mouth?
   a. There is a nerve that runs through the middle ear space called the chorda tympani. This nerve can be affected during surgery and cause a metallic or bad taste on one side of the mouth. This will resolve on its own after 3-4 weeks.

8. Why is there black or red crumbly stuff coming out of my ear?
   a. This is the gelfoam surgical packing. It is ok if some of this falls out of the ear canal, we will remove the rest at your first post-operative visit.