Homecare after Middle Ear or Mastoid Surgery

Middle-ear and mastoid surgery is performed under microscopic vision for extreme precision. The suggestions below should help with a rapid recovery:

- Wear ear dressing for 24 hours then wear at bedtime for 10 days as needed for protection.
- Activity: Avoid heavy lifting and strenuous activity for two weeks.
- Avoid getting water in the ear! Place a cotton ball covered with antibiotic ointment or Vaseline in the ear before showering.
- Packing has been placed in the ear. Do not manipulate or remove it.
- Avoid Aspirin and Ibuprofen for one week to reduce the chance of bleeding.
- Ear drops should be used as directed. Replace the cotton ball after each application.
- It is normal to have drainage, sometimes bloody, from your ear. You may also experience popping, clicking or decreased hearing in that ear for two weeks or more.
- Call your doctor for fever, redness, swelling, pain at the incision site, dizziness or with any other problems or questions.

Taking Care of the Ear:

Prevent water from entering the ear for about two months when washing your child's hair by placing cotton saturated with Vaseline in the outer ear opening. Cotton in the outer ear opening may be changed as needed during the first few days to absorb drainage, but do not attempt to clean or remove any packing from inside the ear canal. Absorbable stitches, if present, do not require removal, and usually dissolve within five to seven days. If the stitches are not covered with tape, apply an antibiotic ointment 2-3 times a day for two weeks.

Swimming is not allowed until your surgeon says it is okay.

Dealing with Pain:

Mild intermittent pain may occur during the first two weeks, particularly above or in the ear, when chewing. If the skin around the surgical area is sensitive, it may be covered with several fluffed-up pads for cushioning. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) can be used as directed, but ibuprofen products (Motrin, Advil) are avoided because they can increase the chance of bleeding. A stronger pain medication may be prescribed if mastoid surgery was performed.

Some Things Not to Worry About:

A hoarse or abnormal voice may occur for several days from the anesthesia tube. Numbness of the skin around the surgical incision is common, and should gradually subside within several days or weeks. Popping or clicking sounds may be heard, along with a feeling of fullness or liquid in the ear; these will resolve gradually as the healing process continues. A mild degree of dizziness may be present on head motion, and is not of concern unless it increases. Hearing may be temporarily worse after surgery because of swelling of the ear tissues and packing in the ear canal; improvement occurs over several months. Taste disturbance and mouth dryness may occur for a few weeks.

When to Call the Doctor:

(1) Discharge from the ear lasts longer than seven days, or shows signs of infection (yellow color, foul odor, or high fever).
(2) Packing or material from inside the ear canal falls out (don't panic).

(3) The skin *around* the sutures becomes swollen, red, or very tender (please note that some redness of the incision itself is normal).

(4) The stitches break or the incision begins to open up.

(5) Your child seems to be getting worse, not better, as the days go by. Your doctor will arrange a postoperative visit to check the healing process and to remove sutures (if necessary).

**For Questions or Emergency Care:**
Call the office at 601-984-5160. You may need to speak with the doctor on-call.