

## Caring for a Child After a Mastoidectomy

This handout will tell you how to care for your child at home after a mastoidectomy.

### What to Expect After Surgery

- Your child may have a big dressing over their ear and head.
- You can expect an incision behind or above the ear. Any stitches will be removed in 7-12 days.
- Your child may have ear numbness that lasts for months.
- There may be mild, blood-stained drainage from their ear.
- They may have packing inside their ear canal.
- They may have some taste changes for a short time.
- A low-grade fever of up to 102°, is normal, for up to 7 days after surgery.
- Your child may hear noises such as cracking or popping, **this is normal**.

### Pain

It is common for a child to have headache pain. Treat with pain medicine as directed.

### Incision Care

Keep the incision **behind** the ear dry for two days. After two days, clean the incision by rinsing and gently patting the skin. Avoid scrubbing.

Check the incision for any signs of infection:

- redness
- swelling
- tenderness
- warmth at site
- pus-like drainage

Your child may have drainage from the ear for several weeks. Put a cotton ball in the

outer ear to catch the drainage. Change the cotton ball as needed. Remove the cotton ball before using prescribed ear drops. **Do not** remove any packing inside the ear.

Keep water **out** of the ear until advised by your doctor. Use a cotton ball with lots of Vaseline® ointment to seal ear when showering. **Do not** put their head under the bath water.

### Activity

- **No** sports, jogging, swimming, aerobics, heavy exercise or lifting over 25 pounds for 4 weeks.
- **No** blowing the nose for 1 week. After 1 week, your child can gently blow it one side at a time to avoid pressure on the ears.
- Your child should keep their mouth open when sneezing or coughing for one week.
- **Do not** let your child lay flat in bed for 3 days after surgery. Use at least 2 pillows to raise their head 30°. Your child should not lay on the treated side until your doctor approves.
- **No** air travel for about 6 weeks. Your doctor will let you know when you can travel by air.
- **No** driving (if old enough) while taking any pain medicine.

### When to Call

- Bleeding that soaks a gauze dressing in 10 minutes or less
- Pain that is not relieved by medicine
- Sudden dizziness
- If packing comes out of the ear
- Significant changes in hearing
- Weakness of the face (facial droop)

- A fever over 102°
- Any signs of infection

**Who to Call**

Pediatric Otolaryngology (ENT) Clinic  
Monday-Friday, 8:30 am - 4:30 pm  
**(608) 263-6420, option 3**

After clinic hours, weekends, and holidays, the number above will give you the paging operator. Ask for the ENT doctor on-call. Leave your name and phone number with the area code. The doctor will call you back. The toll-free number is **1-800-323-8942**.

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright ©1/2021. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#5423.