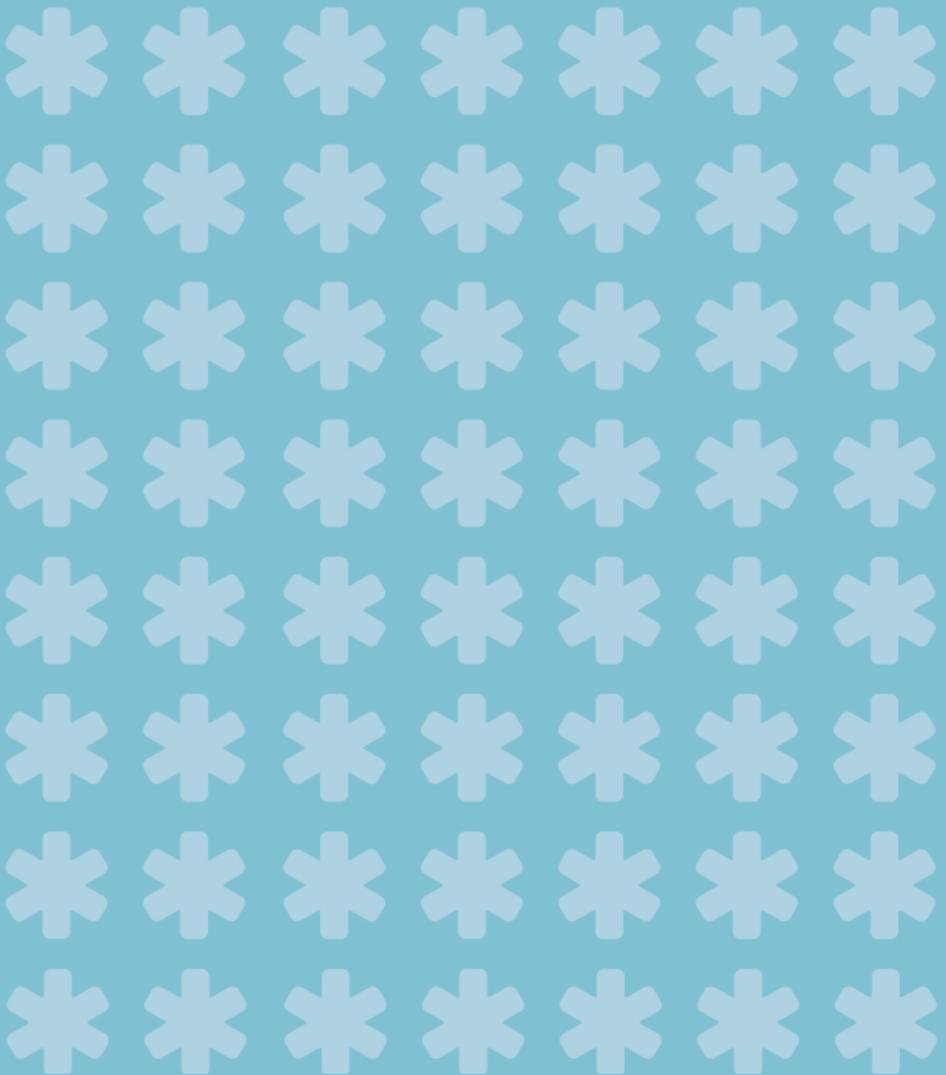


Service information guide

Grommets

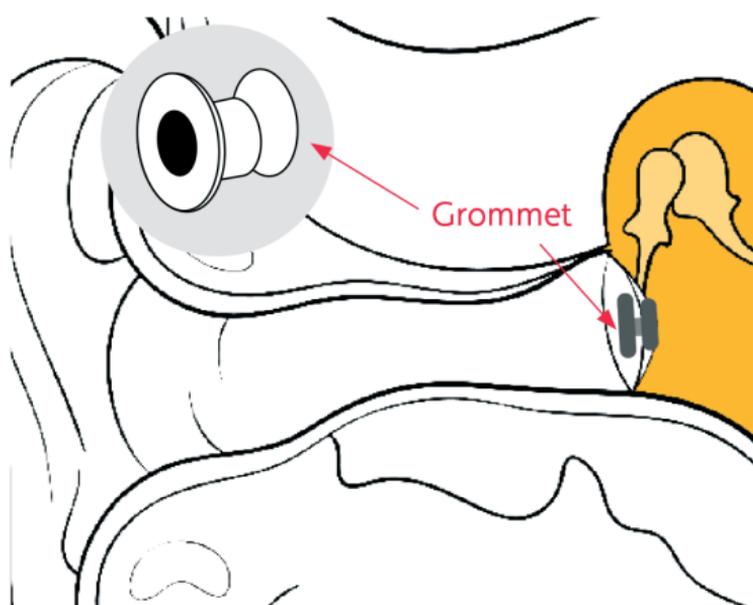


Welcome to
B&NES and Wiltshire Children's
Community Audiology

Grommets are small, temporary tubes that are placed in your child's ear during surgery. They help to drain away fluid and allow air to pass through the eardrum.

What are grommets?

There are several different types of grommets. They are made of plastic and are dumb-bell shaped tubes: narrow in the middle and wider at the ends. They are very small- about the size of the head of a pin. They have a tiny hole running down the centre that lets air through.



How do grommets work?

During surgery, the fluid behind the ear drum in the middle ear is suctioned out. Grommets allow air to enter the middle ear. They help to improve your child's hearing by allowing the tiny bones on the middle ear to move freely again. This improves the symptoms your child has been experiencing whilst the glue ear naturally resolves.

Typical timeline for a child to be treated with grommets

If your child has had two consecutive audiology appointments over a period of 3 months or longer that have shown at least a mild hearing loss in both ears associated with glue ear, your audiologist will consider management options for glue ear with you.

If grommets are offered as a management option, your audiologist will then need to document evidence that your child meets the criteria for funding them. Funding for grommets for children on the NHS is based on specific criteria that have been developed by your local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). For more information on the criteria for grommet insertion through the NHS please ask a member of our team or search for "children and grommets" on your local

CCG website below:
www.wiltshireccg.nhs.uk
www.bathandnortheastsomersetccg.nhs.uk
www.somersetccg.nhs.uk

It is important that you understand why your child has been offered grommets, what alternatives are available, and any questions you have about grommets are answered. The process will include an opportunity for you to discuss how the surgery is carried out and the risks involved with a member of the Ear, Nose, Throat team (ENT) before the surgery. You will be asked to provide written informed consent to your child having grommets before the operation.

A date is booked for the grommets to be put in (usually at the Royal United Hospital) and you will be informed of any specific information including what time to arrive at the hospital. Your child will usually be allowed to go home with you on the same day unless they have any additional health needs which may mean they need a longer stay in hospital.

How are grommets inserted?

Firstly, your child will have a general anaesthetic. This is given by injection in the back of the hand (your child won't feel anything as they put some numbing cream on first).

Next, your child goes into the operating theatre. There the surgeon looks in to the ear with a special microscope. He or she makes a little hole in the eardrum, and gently suctions out the glue. Then the grommet is carefully placed in the eardrum so that it fits in the little hole (the narrow middle part in the eardrum, and the wider ends either side).

All this only takes five minutes for each side

How quickly do grommets work?

Grommets usually start working straight away. Often, your child hears better as soon as they wake up from anaesthetic. Sometimes it is slower for the improvement to be noticeable - weeks or months.

Can my child swim and bathe with grommets?

When bathing, soapy water can slip through the grommet into the middle ear. If the water is dirty it may infect the middle ear. Sit your child upright in the bath and wash their hair first, then tilt their head back and rinse the hair off with clean water. Then apply a shower cap and body wash. This way the child can play in the bath without getting dirty, soapy water in the ear.

Generally, it's OK for your child to go swimming roughly 1-3 weeks after grommets have been put in- check this with your ENT surgeon. A few children get some earache or discharge when they go swimming, especially if they like to dive or jump in. If they do, you can buy some swim plugs from a chemist. They may work even better with a head band. If your child still has ear trouble with swimming, then ask the hearing clinic to arrange for a custom "swim plug" to be made.

Can anything else go wrong?

A discharge (occasionally bloodstained) may occur for a couple of days immediately after the operation.

After this time, there should not be any discharge. Sometimes children with grommets get an infection or irritation around the grommet. This causes a discharge or "running" ears.

- This can sometimes happen after getting water in the ears
- If you see discharge, it does not mean that just "glue" is coming out
- If the ear canal is full of discharge, your child will struggle to hear in that ear
- Gently mop the discharge dry with a tissue, to try to get air into the ear
- If it isn't better after 2 days, it will need treatment. Antibiotic ear drops are often the best treatment. You will need to speak to your GP about this
- Antibiotic ear drops usually work within days. On rare occasions if it isn't better despite various courses of antibiotics, you can discuss with your GP about getting a referral back to the ENT surgeon.

What happens when the grommets fall out?

The eardrum is amazingly good at healing very quickly- usually the drum is as good as new. Very occasionally, the eardrum doesn't heal over, and a little hole- or perforation- remains. These children may need another small operation to repair it. It is likely that a lot of these children would have had a perforation even if they had not had grommets.

Do grommets leave a scar?

Usually there is no scar. Sometimes the eardrum is a little thinner at the place the grommet went in. Quite often the eardrum is left with a white "chalky" mark around the edge. Your child will not notice any difference with their hearing.

Will the glue come back?

It may. Usually it seems that the ear gets better, and there is no more trouble. Children tend to get fewer colds and fewer ear problems as they get older. If concerns remain you will need to discuss management options with the children's hearing team.

What check-ups will my child have?

About 6 weeks after the grommet operation, you should receive an appointment for a check-up. This is usually at your local Children's Audiology clinic. Sometimes it will need to be with the surgeon in Ear Nose and Throat department at the Royal United Hospital. Cras vel magna dui.

For more information about grommets for babies and children please ask a member of our team for details or contact the NDCS.

The National Deaf Children's Society:

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Get in touch

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