



ENT AND FACIAL PLASTIC SURGERY

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BOARD CERTIFIED

Eustachian Tube Dysfunction

What is a Eustachian tube?

All humans have two of them (one in each ear). It is a ventilating duct which extends from the middle ear space (behind the ear drum) to the back of the nose and throat. It opens temporarily when you swallow, yawn, or apply positive pressure (blowing a balloon). Its main function is to equalize middle ear pressure with the outside environment and to drain any fluid from the middle ear to the back of the throat.

What kind of symptoms can I expect with this problem?

1. Plugged feeling in the ears. Some people describe it as if they are speaking or hearing inside a barrel.
2. Ear congestion or discomfort.
3. **If you get discharge from the ear, fever, significant decrease in hearing, or persistent dizziness, then you should contact us as soon as possible.**

Tests:

You may be scheduled to have a hearing test.

Therapy:

1. Inhale steam twice a day: (e.g. pot of boiling water-be careful NOT to inhale very hot steam which can burn). Other sources include a sauna or steam room. Some companies sell vaporizers. Ask our staff regarding the brochure of a company.
2. Place a humidifier at your bedside (warm or cool) during sleep.
3. Spray your nose with **nasal saline spray** two puffs each nostril every 4 hours. This is an over-the-counter medication which is sold in many pharmacies.
4. **Valsalva:** pinch your nose and close your mouth and try to blow as if you are trying to blow a balloon. You can also get a party blower (whistle with the paper portion which rolls out when you blow) and blow it several times a day especially when you are doing steam inhalation. **Do not perform this maneuver if you have a history of or at risk for strokes.**
5. **Be careful not to hyperventilate (take too many breaths in a short time interval).**
6. **Medications:** Depending on your physical exam findings you may be prescribed antibiotics, nasal sprays, or other medicines.

If you have to fly:

1. Use Afrin nasal spray 30 minutes prior to flight, 2 puffs for each nostril.
2. Valsalva or chew gum during ascent or descent.
3. Wear EarPlanes ear plugs.

Precautions:

Don't go scuba diving, flying in an airplane, or climbing mountains without consulting us.

When will I get better?

1. This is usually a self-limiting problem which will resolve over time. It may take as long a few weeks (even months in some people).
2. Occasionally, surgical procedure(s) may be necessary which will be discussed with you in detail at the appropriate time.

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