



Tympanoplasty

Tympanoplasty, or reconstruction of the middle ear hearing mechanism, serves the purpose of rebuilding the eardrum or middle ear bones. It may be as simple as placing a small patch on a hole in the eardrum, or it may be more complicated and involve replacing one of the bones of hearing (called ossiculoplasty). The typical goals of surgery are to improve hearing and allow the ear to be exposed to water without it resulting in an infection.

Surgery is successful in 80 to 90% of cases, and failure to improve is not a complication. Success depends almost as much on the body's ability to heal and preserve the reconstruction as it does on the surgeon's skill. Fortunately, even those cases that fail may be revised and have the same high degree of expected good results.

Nevertheless, some complications do occasionally occur. Further hearing loss (rarely total) happens less than 10% of the time when the middle ear bones are rebuilt. For that reason, ossiculoplasty is not advised unless your hearing is poor.

Hearing loss is uncommon if the operation is limited to repairing the tympanic membrane. Injury to the nerve that moves the face (facial nerve) as a result of this surgery is also extremely rare. Loss of sense of taste on the side of the tongue may occur. It is usually only a minor inconvenience for a few weeks. Persistent post-operative dizziness is almost unheard of after surgical repair of tympanic membrane perforation and uncommon after rebuilding the ear bones.

The use of a hearing aid may be an alternative to surgery, or it may be needed in addition to surgery if the hearing result is not ideal after surgery. If the tympanic membrane perforation is not repaired, we recommend earplugs to protect the middle ear from contamination when bathing.

Post-Operative Instructions & Information

After surgery, it is important to not blow your nose or get the ear wet by swimming, bathing or allowing water to enter the canal when showering until Dr. Litvack tells you that you can do so. Doing these things compromises the success rate of surgery tremendously. Using a cotton ball coated in Vaseline is very helpful in the shower to keep the ear dry.

You may have an incision behind the ear. These sutures will dissolve. Keep the area clean and moist with Vaseline. Most of these scars are nearly invisible within a couple of months. A few months after surgery, Dr. Litvack will likely have you get a hearing test to see how your hearing has improved.