How to care for your child with a Perforated (Ruptured) Eardrum

This leaflet will provide you with information on perforated (Ruptured) eardrum definition, causes, symptoms, diagnosis, home care tips and when to seek medical advice.

What is a perforated eardrum?

A perforated eardrum is a hole in the membrane (the tissue of the eardrum) that separates your ear canal from your middle ear.

What are the causes of perforated eardrums?

- **Middle ear infection** can result in the accumulation of fluids in your middle ear, which can cause the eardrum to tear up.
- **Barotrauma (a sudden uncomfortable feeling where your child feels their ears are blocked)**: air pressure changes associated with air travel, scuba diving and the impact of a car airbag can cause Barotrauma.
- **Loud sounds or blasts** can rarely cause a tear in your eardrum.
- **Foreign objects** in your ear can puncture the eardrum.
- **Head injury**
What are the symptoms of perforated eardrums?

- Ear pain that worsens before suddenly getting better
- Discharge from ear
- Hearing loss
- Ringing in your ear
- Spinning sensation
- Nausea or vomiting that can result from spinning sensation

How is perforated eardrum diagnosed?

The doctor will ask a few detailed questions about your child's health and examine your child's ear using a small handheld torch.

How is a perforated eardrum treated?

- Perforated eardrums usually heal without treatment within a few weeks
- You may get antibiotic drops if there is signs of infection
- If the hole in your eardrum doesn't heal by itself, treatment may include procedures to close the hole by an ENT (Ear Nose and Throat) specialist
- If follow up is needed, arrangement will be made, and you will be contacted for a follow up appointment in the ENT specialist clinic

Home care advice

- **Keep your child's ear dry.** Place a waterproof silicone earplug or cotton ball coated with petroleum jelly in your ear when showering or bathing.
- **Refrain from cleaning your ears,** so it gets time to heal.
- **Avoid blowing the nose.** The pressure created can damage your healing eardrum.
- **Hold a warm piece of cloth** against the ear to help reduce any pain

- **If your doctor advises giving medicine, you can give**
  - Paracetamol (any brand) or Ibuprofen (any brand)
  - Follow the instruction on the medicine package for the correct dose for your child
  - Do not give your child Aspirin as this can cause serious complications
When should I seek medical advice?

- Mild to moderate pain
- Bloody or pus-filled discharge leaking from the ear
- Nausea, vomiting, or consistent dizziness
- Ringing in the ears
- Hearing loss

Go to the Emergency Department if your child:

- Has severe pain in the ear
- Has swelling behind the ear
- Has difficulty in breathing
- Is unable to drink any liquids
- Appears dry and produces less urine
- Has Something in the ear