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Hearing and Ears

Well we did it, we made it through January! How many viruses went through your family recently? We had several, and this year no perforated ear drums. But I remember the agony from a few years ago, and thought I would share the information for you.



What is a perforated ear drum?

- A hole appears in the ear drum and is most often caused by ear infections. The infection disturbs the pressure balance either side of the ear drum and fluid may build up in the middle ear. This can cause a hole or tear to form in the ear drum.

Other causes can include:

- air pressure changes associated with air travel.
- scuba diving
- a direct blow to the ear, such as the impact of an automobile air bag.
- Loud sounds or blasts (acoustic trauma).

How do I know if my child has a perforated ear drum?

- sudden hearing loss – you realise that your child is not responding to you in the same way. It might feel they are ignoring you (more than normal).
- Your child might complain of earache or pain in their ear.
- Your child might be itching the ear.
- You notice fluid leaking from the ear – this can be clear, bloody, green or yellow. (in the case of my son, it was green and looked like a snotty nose coming from the ear).
- Your child has a high temperature.
- Your child might complain of ringing or buzzing in your ear (tinnitus)

How to help while you wait for the ear drum to heal?

For any child with suspected hearing loss – speak to the ear that is clear.

- Use the child's name to get their attention.
- Turn off background noise (TV / radio) to get a child's attention
- Touch their arm to show you want their attention
- Speak slowly and clearly
- Raising your voice might help. Shouting can distort your speech, so it's a fine balance.
- Use visuals / gestures / objects to help your child to understand.

Good to know?

- Children with recurrent hearing infections can be more prone to speech and language difficulties.
- If your child has many perforated ear drums, they might need a T tube – definitely discuss recurring ear infections with your doctor.

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