

Tympanoplasty and Mastoidectomy

Definition

Tympanoplasty with mastoidectomy is surgery which corrects middle ear problems in both the **tympanic membrane** (eardrum) and the **mastoid bone** (bony honeycomb of air pockets located just behind the ear).

The procedure is most frequently used to address two common problems affecting both health and hearing. **Chronic otitis media** is a persistent infection of the middle ear that can spread to the mastoid bone. A chronic infection can also stimulate skin to grow through a hole in the tympanic membrane, into the middle ear and mastoid bone. This growth is called a **cholesteatoma**, and it has the potential to grow and destroy mastoid bone.

Once a cholesteatoma has developed or the mastoid bone has become infected, it is rarely possible to cure the patient with medical treatment. Surgical intervention is often required to stop the disease from progressing. Mastoid bone problems that are not treated may cause:

- Deafness.
- Facial nerve damage.
- Dizziness.
- Brain infection or abscess.
- Death.

Treatment

In the tympanoplasty and mastoidectomy procedure, the infected portion of the mastoid bone and middle ear is removed and the eardrum is reconstructed.

The surgery is usually done while the patient is under **general anesthesia**. You will not be aware that the operation is taking place. The surgeon will reach the middle ear through an incision behind your ear. If your mastoid bone has significant damage, the surgery may be difficult and last several hours.

After surgery, you will likely spend one or two nights in the hospital. Depending on your rate of recovery, you can expect to return to normal activities within two weeks. Your doctor may request that you refrain from swimming, or other activities that may put a large amount of pressure on your ear, for three or four months.

Your doctor will ask that you rest while your ear heals. During the healing period, you should be careful to:

- Take your medicine as directed.
- Avoid strenuous activities.
- Avoid getting water in your ear.
- Avoid blowing your nose.
- Avoid aspirin or products containing aspirin.

Complications

It is normal to experience the following problems after surgery:

- Pain or discomfort.
- Pink, clear, or yellow drainage from the ear.
- Dizziness or lack of balance.
- **Tinnitus** (an echo or ringing sound).
- Slight metallic or salty taste in food.
- Slight loss of hearing.

These are expected during the healing period and are usually temporary. Sometimes patients experience complications that are serious, including:

- Facial weakness or paralysis.
- Persistent ear drainage.
- Infection in the mastoid cavity.
- Prolonged or permanent hearing loss.

Call your doctor if you develop signs of these problems, or have infection around the incision in the ear.

Prognosis

A good result may be expected in 80-90% of the cases. Occasionally, the hearing in the affected ear does not improve.

For More Information

American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery

One Prince St., Alexandria, VA 22314-3357

Phone: (703) 836-4444

<http://www.entnet.org/healthinfo/index.cfm>