

GROMMETS AND WATER

A guide for patients and parents

One of the greatest concerns amongst parents and patients with grommets relates to water exposure.

Grommets contain a hole that is about 1mm in diameter. For water to cause problems it needs to travel down the ear canal, through the tiny hole in the grommet and settle in the middle ear. Soapy water can usually travel through small holes easier. Water in the middle ear can lead to mild discomfort, pain or rarely infections.

Whilst it is important to be sensible around water when one has grommets in place, the risks of serious problems or damage to the ears is **very uncommon**.

Please follow the following guidelines in order to minimize the risk of ear problems around water.

Showering – Usually no ear protection or covers are needed. Avoid direct jets of water into the ear canal. If using shampoo, some cotton-wool in the ear canal with some Vaseline on the outside of the wool is useful.

Bathing – Bath water is usually soapy and far from sterile. Shallow baths for youngsters are recommended. If kids are going to put their head under the water, we recommend firm fitting ear plugs (see below) or encouraging them to shower instead. Hair washing is best done with running water from the tap or with a wet facecloth.

Pool swimming – Kids with grommets should be encouraged to swim. Firm fitting ear plugs and a swimming cap or band are recommended to keep chlorinated water out of the ears. Blutak can also be used instead of plugs but it can be hard for kids to hear instructions. If kids refuse to wear any ear protection it is probably still OK that they swim but be aware the water may sting or their ears may discharge for a day or two after a trip to the pool.

Beach swimming – This is usually fine without protection though if snorkelling or going a little deeper than the surface, firm fitting earplugs are recommended.

Diving – This cannot be done with grommets in the ears as the high water pressure at depth will push water through the grommets and cause dizziness, which is very dangerous.

We recommend (and stock) Docs™ proplugs as well as a variety of headbands. You or your child can be fitted with the appropriate size at your appointment.

