



AURES EAR HEALTH

GUIDANCE AND INFORMATION

EAR DRUM PERFORATION

What is an ear drum perforation?

A perforated eardrum is a hole or tear that has developed in the eardrum.

If a perforation is found following irrigation or microsuction treatment you will be informed. We will ensure that any water is thoroughly mopped from your ear canal and you will be advised to keep your ears dry to enable healing to take place. You will be advised to see your GP for assessment in case you require antibiotics.

What causes a perforation?

- A middle ear infection – The build-up of infected fluid or mucous in the middle ear causes more pressure against your eardrum and occasionally causes the ear drum to perforate. The infected mucous or discharge then seeps from the middle ear into your ear canal.
- Trauma - direct or indirect cotton bud use, or a blow to the head
- Pressure – changes in pressure, such as when flying or scuba diving
- Very loud noises, such as an explosion

What will a perforation feel like?

- Pain or discomfort
- Discharge
- Reduced hearing
- Repeat infections
- Tinnitus

How is a perforation treated?

- Usually, no treatment is required and a perforation will heal within 6 to 8 weeks
- If there is an infection, topical antibiotic treatment will be required. A perforation will not heal until the infection is clear.
- If the perforation does not heal, a referral can be sent to Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) to assess the perforation and discuss available options, such as an operation to repair the perforation.

Looking after your perforation

- Keep your ear dry when swimming, washing your hair or showering by using cotton wool smeared in Vaseline in the entrance of your ear canal to create a waterproof seal. This is particularly important with a perforation to minimise the risk of infection in the middle ear.
- Avoid using cotton buds or other items, such as hair grips, to clean your ears.

When should I seek advice?

If you have any problems or concerns such as your ear becoming painful or you experience any discharge from your ear, contact:

Your GP surgery or NHS 111.