

DESCRIPTION

A hole or tear in the eardrum. The eardrum is a thin membrane (tympanic membrane) that separates the inner ear from the outer ear.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Sudden pain in the ear.
- Bleeding or discharge from the ear (sometimes).
- Some loss of hearing or ringing in the ear.
- Dizziness.

CAUSES

- Using a sharp object to clean the ear or relieve an itch.
- A loud noise, such as a nearby explosion.
- A blow or hit directly to the ear or head (skull fracture).
- Changes in air pressure (scuba diving, airplane flight, etc.)
- Middle-ear infection (otitis media).

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The eardrum will usually repair itself in 2 months. If it becomes infected, the infection is curable with treatment. Any hearing loss is usually short-term. Surgery may be recommended if the ear drum does not heal. Complications of a ruptured eardrum may include:

- Ear infection, with fever, vomiting and diarrhea.
- Mastoiditis. This is an infection of the mastoid (bony area just behind the ear).
- Permanent hearing loss (rare).

GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider can diagnose the problem by an exam of the ear. Fluid from the ear may be sent to the lab for a medical test. A hearing test may be performed.
- Try to avoid blowing your nose. If you must, blow gently.
- Keep the ear as dry as possible. Don't swim. Take baths instead of showers. If you do shower, be sure the ear is covered.
- Surgery called tympanoplasty may be done to repair the hole if it doesn't heal within 2 months.

MEDICATIONS

- Antibiotics may be prescribed to prevent or treat infections may be prescribed.
- Oral steroids may also be prescribed to reduce inflammation.
 - You should begin your steroid prescription today.
 - You should begin your steroid prescription tomorrow.
- Stronger pain relieving medication may be prescribed for moderate to severe pain.

Your doctor also recommends the following over-the-counter medications. These medications may offer significant symptom relief:

- For mild pain use acetaminophen or ibuprofen.
(Acetaminophen and ibuprofen may also be alternated every 3 hours for persistent pain.)
- Antihistamine
- Decongestant (Such as Phenylephrine or Pseudoephedrine)
- Mucolytic (Such as Guaifenesin)

- ↳ Unless your doctor tells you differently, always finish the full course of your antibiotic and/or steroid prescription, even if you start to feel better.
- ↳ Antibiotics and steroids may interfere with the effectiveness of birth control pills. Use an alternative method of contraception for the remainder of the month after finishing your antibiotic and/or steroid prescription.

SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION IF

- Fever.
- Pain that persists, despite treatment.
- Dizziness that continues longer than 12-24 hours.