

# TYMPANIC MEMBRANE PERFORATION (Ruptured Eardrum)



## ■ ■ ■ Description

The eardrum is a thin membrane that protects the middle and inner ear from the outside environment. The eardrum helps you hear by transmitting sound waves to the bones in your ear and then to the nervous system for interpretation. This membrane is very thin and potentially can be ruptured. Any hole in the eardrum constitutes a perforation and can expose the inner ear to damage.

## ■ ■ ■ Common Signs and Symptoms

- Ear pain
- Sometimes no symptoms
- Decreased hearing
- Fluid drainage from ear

## ■ ■ ■ Causes

- Most commonly, a middle ear infection from built-up pressure
- Injury from a cotton swab
- Injury to the side of the head

## ■ ■ ■ Risk Increases With

- Frequent middle ear infections
- Use of cotton swabs

## ■ ■ ■ Preventive Measures

- Do not use cotton swabs in the ear canal.
- If you have ear pain or pressure, see your doctor to rule out an ear infection that needs treatment.

## ■ ■ ■ General Treatment Considerations

The perforation in the tympanic membrane usually heals itself. This may take several weeks. During this time, do not allow water or any fluid to enter your ear canal. This must be done with ear plugs and avoidance of submersion, as in swimming. Furthermore, ear drops may protect you from infection, but they should be used cautiously, because they may damage the inner ear. Finally, you need to follow up with your doctor to be sure the perforation has healed; otherwise, permanent hearing loss could develop. Large and nonhealing perforations must be repaired by a specialized surgeon.

Notes:

(Up to 4400 characters only)

Notes and suggestions