

The EarPopper Significantly Improves Quality Of Life In Sufferers Of Eustachian Tube Dysfunction

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The Eustachian tube is a short narrow canal which connects the middle ear with the nasal cavity. It allows equalization of the air pressure in the middle ear with that of the surrounding environment. Without equalization the surrounding pressure tends to become higher than the pressure in the middle ear, resulting in stretching of the eardrum (tympanic membrane). This can cause discomfort, pain, deafness, fullness in the ears and even rupture of the eardrum. Without ventilation the air in the middle ear is absorbed by the skin which lines it, creating a negative pressure which draws fluid into the space. This causes deafness by reducing the ability of the eardrum to vibrate. Infection of this fluid may occur; this is known as otitis media. Treatment with antibiotics may be required and the advice of a doctor should be sought.

What Is Eustachian Tube Dysfunction?

Eustachian tube dysfunction is the medical term used to describe the inability of the Eustachian tube to open and equalize the pressure in the middle ear with the outside world. There are several possible reasons for this including having a narrow Eustachian tube, as is found in children. Other causes include poor function of the tiny hairs in the ear and nasal cavity, resulting in a buildup of mucus. Allergy, infection and other types of inflammation may also narrow the tube and prevent it from opening. Enlarged adenoids are also often to blame for this condition. The adenoids are small collections of tissue at the back of the throat, just above the tonsils, which are involved in immunity. They can become enlarged and press on the opening to the tube. Tumors are a rare cause of Eustachian tube dysfunction which can cause blockage through pressure.

Rapid change in pressure can also result in symptoms of reduced hearing, fullness in the ears and pain or discomfort. This can occur with flying and scuba-diving.

Treatment

Anti-inflammatory medications such as ibuprofen and aspirin may be helpful in reducing the problem but there are significant side-effects from taking these medications for a prolonged period of time. Antihistamines may be of benefit if allergy is the cause.

If the condition is severe then a surgical operation may be required in order to improve the sufferers' quality of life. Operations which may help include adenoidectomy and

tympanostomy. Adenoidectomy involves a general anaesthetic and removal of the adenoids. Tympanostomies involves surgically making a small hole in the eardrum and inserting a plastic grommet to hold the hole open and stop it healing. This allows ventilation of the middle ear, taking over the role from the Eustachian tube.

The EarPopper is an excellent alternative to surgery for the treatment of Eustachian tube dysfunction. It works by increasing the pressure in the nasal cavity, making it possible to equalize the pressure in the middle ear by swallowing, overcoming the blockage of the tube. This improves hearing, reduces the sensation of fullness in the ear, and reduces discomfort. It is simple enough to use for it to be helpful for children, and works with all causes of the problem. The device is highly recommended by users who find that it significantly improves their quality of life without having an operation or taking a large amount of medication which can have significant side effects. ■