

Evidence based referral pathway Grommets for otitis media with effusion

At least 50% of Otitis Media with effusion (OME) will resolve spontaneously within 3 months. Therefore a period of watchful waiting for at least 3 months is the best management strategy for children with otitis media with effusion.

Referral for an ENT opinion for consideration of grommets should only be considered for patients satisfying the following criteria:

Referral criteria	
There has been a period of at least three months watchful waiting from the date of the first appointment with an audiologist or GP <u>AND</u> either A, B or C	
A	For children aged 3 and over:
	OME persists after three months and the child (over three years of age) suffers from at least one of the following:
	at least 5 recurrences of acute otitis media in a year;
	OR evidenced delay in speech development;
	OR educational or behavioural problems attributable to persistent hearing impairment, with a hearing loss of at least 25dB particularly in the lower tones (low frequency loss); Please provide actual dB hearing loss
	OR a second disability such as Down's syndrome or cleft palate.
	OR severe collapse of the eardrum
or B	the child (any age) has had at least 5 occurrences of acute otitis media in the last year with additional complications such as perforations, persistent discharge, febrile convulsions, sensorineural deafness or cochlear implant
or C	For children aged under 2 years - the child has:
	OME with prolonged effusion (6 months or longer);
	AND measured hearing loss;
	AND disability attributable to hearing loss (delay in speech development or other problems).

Rationale behind the decision

OME is commonly seen in paediatric practice and accounts for 25–35% of all cases of otitis media. The disease is ultimately self-limiting in most cases.

Technical terminology defined

Otitis media is an inflammation in the middle ear.

Otitis media with effusion (OME), or 'glue ear', is serous or mucoid but not mucopurulent fluid in the middle ear. Children usually present with hearing impairment and speech problems.

References (accessed April 2017)

1. BMJ Article, Is your grommet really necessary? Jun 2005; 330: 1353 ; doi:10.1136/bmj.330.7504.1353. Available online at: <http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/330/7504/1353?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=grommets&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>
2. The Cochrane Library, Grommets (ventilation tubes) for hearing loss associated with otitis media with effusion in children, Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, Review updated September 2004. Available online at: <http://www.cochrane.org/reviews/en/ab001801.html>
3. NICE CG 60, Otitis media with effusion in under 12s: surgery Clinical guideline Published date: February 2008. Available online at: <https://www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/CG60>