

EUSTACHIAN TUBE DYSFUNCTION AND FLYING

Flying with blocked ears

- Individuals facing Eustachian tube issues may encounter challenges in equalizing middle ear pressure during air travel.
- As an aircraft ascends, the atmospheric pressure decreases, causing a relative rise in middle ear air pressure. Conversely, during landing, atmospheric pressure increases, leading to a relative decline in middle ear pressure. In either scenario, if the Eustachian tube isn't functioning properly, discomfort due to abnormal middle ear pressure may arise, with the most intense pain typically occurring during descent.
- To prevent middle ear problems associated with flying, it is advisable to abstain from flying when experiencing acute upper respiratory issues like a cold, allergy, or sinus infection. If flying becomes necessary despite such problems or if there is a chronic Eustachian tube concern, the following steps may be helpful:
- Use Otrivine nasal spray that you can obtain from your pharmacist. Use Otrivine nasal spray as directed shortly before boarding to alleviate nasal congestion.
- If your ears feel blocked during takeoff, hold your nose and swallow to alleviate excess air pressure in the middle ear.
- 45 minutes before landing, use the nasal spray every five minutes for 15 minutes. Chew gum, or suck on a lolly (candy) to encourage swallowing and Eustachian tube opening.
- It is ill-advised to fly with an acute upper respiratory infection. If unavoidable, refrain from forcefully popping your ears.
- For frequent flyers, a surgeon may suggest a grommet (middle ear ventilation tube) to minimize ear discomfort and damage.

