



What is a Tissue Expander?



Tissue Expanders are bags made of a rubber-like material, very much like a balloon. They come in different shapes and sizes and can hold from 4 to 25 ounces of water when they are filled. Expanders can be used in many different places: neck, chest, abdomen and scalp. They don't work well in the arms and legs. Each expander has a little disc (like a button) and small tube attached to it. This is where it is filled each time.

How does it work? EXPANDERS • EXPANDERS What can I do? DE

Expanders are made to stretch skin as they are filled. Think of when a woman is going to have a baby. As the baby grows, her abdomen (stomach area) gets bigger little by little.

The expander does the same thing. Everytime it is filled with water, the skin stretches little by little. When there is enough skin stretched to cover a scarred area near it, the bag is taken out in surgery and the "flap", or stretched skin is moved to cover the scarred skin.

How long does it take?

When your doctor puts the expander(s) in, you will be in the hospital for about three days. About 2 weeks later, the stitches or staples are removed. If the incision line is well healed at that time, the expander can start being filled. The first fill will be done in Cincinnati.

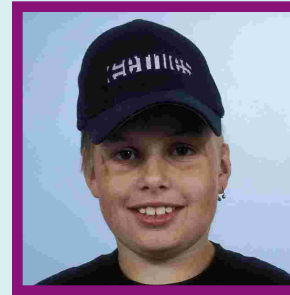
A numbing cream can be used over the port so it won't hurt much at all. The skin over the port (disc) is cleaned and a small needle is put into the port. The saline (salt water) is injected into the bag until the expander feels tight.

Sometimes after the scalp expander is filled, you might have a little headache, but Tylenol will usually help it go away. In a few hours, the expander will feel soft again.

If you live out of the Cincinnati area, we will try to find a doctor close to your home who will fill the expander for you every week. We can also teach a parent to fill it at home. This will save you trips to Cincinnati.

The expander(s) take about 3 to 4 months to completely fill. You will see your doctor in Cincinnati every 4 to 6 weeks so he can check the progress of the expander(s). When the doctor thinks it is filled enough, a surgery date will be scheduled for taking out the expander. It will still need to be filled every week until your surgery unless your doctor says differently.

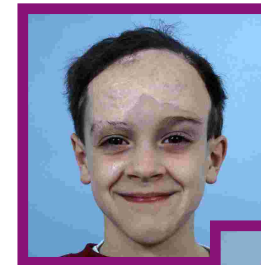
What will my friends say?



Obviously, you will look a little different as the expander fills. Most of the kids say their friends find the whole thing interesting and they don't get teased much. As the expander gets bigger little by little, your friends and family get used to it. Most kids wear a baseball cap, a wild expandable hat, or a bandana to cover their heads while the expander is in. If needed, a note can be written to your school to allow to wear your special head cover!



Daily activities should go on as usual. There is no reason to miss school or playing with friends. However, you should avoid rough play, swimming and any contact sports or activities. We can give you a note to excuse you from those activities at school, if you need one.



EX Complications • EXPA

The expanders work very well, but there can be problems. Fortunately, complications are not dangerous, only a nuisance. Our complication rate here is about 20% as compared to 37% nationally. Sometimes the suture line will become infected or just separate and the expander will have to be removed. Others problems include trauma, such as falling or being hit by hard objects.

We hope this pamphlet has given you the information you need to make a decision about tissue expanders. If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us at:

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