



Department of Surgery

Prominent Ears Surgery / Otoplasty

Information for parents and carers

Introduction

This leaflet aims to give you information about surgery for prominent ears and how your child will be treated at Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust.

What is otoplasty?

Otoplasty is a surgical procedure that is performed to change the position of prominent ears.

Why is surgery needed?

Otoplasty is an operation that sets the ear back closer to the head. It is usually performed for cosmetic reasons. It is important that the child wants to have the operation themselves because their co-operation is needed during treatment and this surgery leads to a permanent change in their appearance.

Are there any alternatives to otoplasty?

As this procedure is usually performed for cosmetic reasons, there is no medical need for children to have this operation. Psychological support can be very helpful if your child is having problems with bullying or has low self-esteem because of their appearance. The surgeon may refer you to a psychologist before considering surgery.

At what age is surgery performed?

Surgery is usually only performed on children aged 7 years and older. This procedure is very rarely performed on children who are younger than 7 years old, because they have a higher risk of complications and cannot fully understand why they are having surgery.

Will we see a doctor before my child has the operation?

An appointment will be made for you to see the surgeon. Following the consultation with the surgeon, you may be asked to give your consent for photographs of your child's ears to be taken. The photographs will be kept in your child's records for future reference.

Will my child require an anaesthetic?

The operation is performed under general anaesthetic (whilst your child is asleep). The anaesthetist (the doctor who will put your child asleep) will ask you questions about your child's health and also answer any questions you may have. There are some risks with any anaesthesia, but there are not usually any problems in a healthy child.

Who will carry out the operation?

The operation will be performed by a plastic surgery registrar or consultant. We cannot guarantee that a particular surgeon will be able to carry out the surgery.



What will happen during the operation?

An incision (cut) is made behind the ear. The tissue (cartilage) of the ear will then be reshaped. Sometimes, stitches are placed inside the tissue to hold the new position. The incision behind the ear is then stitched and the ears are bandaged. The bandages will be on for 7 - 10 days and will provide support and comfort until the ears are healed.

Will the operation hurt my child?

There may be some mild discomfort after the operation and pain relief can be given whilst your child is in hospital. Pain relief medicine will be prescribed for when your child goes home. It is best to give this medicine regularly for the first few days.

Your child may suffer with vomiting following surgery. This may be due to the anaesthetic. Or sometimes ear surgery may cause your child to feel nauseous. This may prolong your child's stay in hospital..

How long will my child stay in hospital?

Once they have had the operation, children usually go home the same day. If the operation is performed late in the afternoon, or if any complications occur, your child may need to stay in overnight.

What complications may occur?

- Bleeding** Following surgery and for the first couple of days, the ears may bleed a little. You must bring your child to the hospital if there are signs of bleeding.
- Haematoma** A localized swelling filled with blood, a bit like a "blood blister."
- Infection** On rare occasions, the wound behind the ears can become infected. This can be identified by a rise in temperature, painful ears (not relieved by pain relief medicine) or if your child is generally unwell. You must ring the hospital for advice. The infection can be treated with antibiotics
- Scarring** It is difficult to know what your child's scar will look like as all children are different. Most scars are unnoticeable behind the ear but rarely some children form thickened scars called "keloid" scars.
- Asymmetry** Most people have slight differences between their each ear. As with any cosmetic surgery, the outcome cannot always be perfect. The ears may not look exactly the same or as expected.

What happens after the operation?

The bandages remain on for 7-10 days. It is very important that the bandages are left undisturbed during this time.

At 7-10 days, you will be asked to bring your child to an outpatient clinic where the bandages will be removed by the nursing staff. The nursing staff will thoroughly check the wound site and remove any stitches. It is normal for the ears to be bruised and swollen at this stage.

Are there any other problems that may occur?

Slipped bandages

Sometimes the bandages slip off and if this happens, you can put a headband on to protect the ears and phone the Burns Unit to arrange a time to bring your child in and have their ears checked and re-bandaged. You must never push the bandage up or attempt to re-bandage them yourself.



Itching

It is common to experience itchiness of the ears. It must be stressed that nothing must be pushed under the bandages to scratch the ears. Scratching outside the bandages may also cause damage to the ears. Medicine can be given to your child to relieve the itching.

Will we see the surgeon again?

A further appointment will be made for your child to see the plastic surgeon in 3- 4 months' time.

How do we look after our child at home?

Following the removal of dressings, you can wash your child's hair - just ensure the ears are dried properly.

Usually the ears will be healed and your child will need to wear a head band or bandaging at night time for approximately 4 weeks. The bandages will continue to support and protect the ears whilst your child is asleep.

When can my child return to school?

Once the bandages have been removed, your child can return to school. However, your child must avoid playing contact sports, where there is a risk of bruising to the ears, for 2 months following the removal of the dressings.

Who can I contact for further information?

If you have any concerns you can ring the Burns Unit, where the plastic surgery nurses are based, on the direct line number at any time of the day or night.

Burns Unit Direct Telephone Line 0151 252 5400

Secretary, Plastic Surgery 0151 252 5386



This leaflet only gives general information. You must always discuss the individual treatment of your child with the appropriate member of staff. Do not rely on this leaflet alone for information about your child's treatment. This information can be made available in other languages and formats if requested.

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