

Pinnaplasty or Otoplasty

(Surgery to correct prominent ears)

Correction of prominent ears (also known as pinnaplasty or otoplasty) is used to adjust the shape or position of ears that are considered to protrude excessively. In adults this operation can be carried out as an outpatient under local anaesthetic, but in young children a general anaesthetic is required.

- Here, we explain some of the aims, benefits, risks and alternatives to this operation. We want you to be informed about your choices and to be fully involved in making any decisions.
- Please ask about anything you do not fully understand or wish to have explained in more detail.
- If you would like this information in another format or language please ask a member of our staff.

REASON FOR THE OPERATION:

Around 2% of the UK population consider their ears to be too prominent. The ear is made of cartilage and skin and the most prominent ears often lack one of the normal folds of cartilage. Although this does not cause a medical problem, many people feel self-conscious and children may be teased. The operation aims to restore a more "normal" shape and position to the ear.

THE OPERATION:

Instructions will be given about coming into hospital when your admission is arranged, but it may be necessary to attend before your operation if you take regular medications or if you have certain health problems.

The procedure is usually performed under a general anaesthetic, which means that the patient is unconscious and unaware during the operation. The anaesthetist will see you before your operation and discuss the anaesthetic with you.

Once the anaesthetic has been administered, the surgeon makes small cuts behind the ear to expose the cartilage. The cartilage is then reshaped to the required position and may be held here with stitches under the skin. The initial cuts behind the ear are stitched up with dissolvable stitches that do not need removal. At the end of the operation a bandage is applied to hold the ears in position and protect them from being bumped. The bandage is kept on for 7-10 days.

A pinnaplasty takes between one and two hours to complete and patients can usually go home the same day.

WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER THE OPERATION:

If you have had a general anaesthetic it may take a little time after the operation before you are awake enough to return to the ward. During this time you will be closely looked after but may feel sleepy and a little sick.

Most patients will be able to leave hospital on the same day as their operation. The bandage must stay on for 7-10 days and arrangements will be made to remove this in the clinic. If the bandage falls off before this time please contact the clinic on the number below. Once the bandage comes off, it is advisable to wear a headband when asleep to keep the ears pinned back.

The head bandage and cuts made at operation should be kept dry; hair should not be washed until two weeks after the operation.

It is normal for the ears to be sore and simple painkillers (eg paracetamol/calpol) can be taken. If the pain is severe or if there is any bleeding you should contact the clinic or the ward on the numbers below. The ears often feel itchy, but it is important not to disturb the healing process by removing the bandage or scratching the ears.

It should be possible to return to work/school once the bandages are off but contact sports and swimming should be avoided for a further four weeks.

SIDE EFFECTS AND COMPLICATIONS:

Some of the more common problems are listed below – this list is intended to inform rather than alarm you.

- **Scars** – A scar will be present behind the ear but in most people this fades with time. Occasionally the scars may become thickened and more prominent, requiring further treatment in some cases.
- **Shape** – It should not be expected that the ears will be a perfect match following the operation but obvious differences between the two sides are uncommon. In some cases further surgery may be required.
- **Bleeding** – If bleeding occurs through the bandage or if pain is severe please contact the ward or clinic for removal of the bandage and examination of the ears. It may be necessary to undertake a further operation to stop persistent bleeding.
- **Infection** – The wound or stitches may become infected and need treatment with antibiotics or a further operation to remove some stitches.

Contact numbers

- Royal United Hospital 01225 428331
- ENT clinic nurse 01225 425225