

## Otoplasty

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### About

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The most common reason for undertaking surgery on your ears is to pin them back to the side of the head. An otoplasty or ear set back procedure is sometimes also referred to as a ‘pinnaplasty’. This is because the ears are also known as ‘pinnae’ in medical jargon.

Although it is more common for children to undergo a procedure to pin back the ears, it is quite common for adults to request this procedure as well.

Prominent ears are usually an inherited condition. Therefore it is not unlikely that you will have noticed a relative with outstanding ears or perhaps you will be aware that somebody in your family has undergone surgical ear correction in the past.

### Indications

When the ears stick out too much from the side of the head they tend to dominate the facial appearance. Another common reason for ear correction surgery is significant asymmetry. For example one ear may be significant larger or more prominent than the other. In these circumstances the aspect of the face that is immediately noticed are the ears. This often draws unwanted attention

to the individual concerned making them sensitive about their appearance.

In the case of children this may invite teasing, bullying or unpleasant comments from their playmates. It is therefore best to carry out this kind of surgery for children sooner rather than later, preferably before they start school. In this way any possible hang up about their ears is avoided.

Unfortunately older children who have prominent ears have often already had to put up with hurtful comments.

There are of course other reasons to undergo an ear set back procedure.

Adults often decide to have surgery because they have been sensitive about the appearance of the ears for a long time. For example a lady might feel sensitive about wearing her hair up and away from her ears. Both men and women may have a job where they work in a public role and may feel less confident than they should because they that others are staring at them.

In the adult age group the opportunity for corrective surgery may not have been present in childhood because of financial or other reasons.

During your first consultation with our surgeons we will be more than happy to discuss your concerns and expectations and answer all your questions regarding the operation and post-operative care. So why don't you make an appointment to visit **SFMedica** today?

## Ear Surgery Consultation

If you are the parent of a young child it is understandable that you will be concerned about making a decision for your child to have cosmetic surgery to the ears. It is likely that your concerns will be about the anaesthetic and also about whether the procedure will be painful. No doubt you will have wondered how long it will take for to recover from the procedure and about how successful the procedure may be. These are all questions that would concern any caring parent who is making what for them, is a big decision.

Both adults and children will have photos of their ears taken both before and after surgery.

Adequate time for discussion about the procedure with the surgeon will be possible.

Any unusual features or issues that may arise in the individual will be pointed out and discussed.

## Surgery Explained

### Surgery in children

In children otoplasty is carried out under general anaesthesia. Most children do not complain of pain. Generally the operation takes about 90 minutes.

In children the ears are usually quite soft so the ear set back is accomplished by the use of internal stitches. The ear cartilage or gristle usually needs to be folded back on itself. The corrected position is usually held in place with stitches which are invisible on the outside.

The only visible cut is at the back of the ear in the fold or skin crease between the head and ear itself. The scar or incision is usually inconspicuous

especially after about 3 to 6 months.

Traditionally a head bandage or dressing is applied and kept in place for about a week but this is not always necessary especially in older children.

If your child goes to school they would usually be off for about a week to 10 days. If there are skin stitches these will be removed after a week.

Although an overnight stay is sometimes necessary mostly an otoplasty is a day case procedure.

### Otoplasty in adults

Adults are usually able to have an otoplasty under a local anaesthetic. Surgery will virtually always be done as a day case.

However there are some special considerations. The adult ear is "stiffer" than that of a child. Therefore the ear cartilage may be more difficult to fold back upon itself. If this is the case the ear cartilage may need to be weakened by so-called "scoring" of the cartilage. This means that cuts or incisions are used to make the ear easier to fold backwards. Sometimes a combination of such cuts or scoring incisions and internal stitches are necessary to achieve a good result.

A head dressing is usually not applied in an adult. The skin cut will however also be behind the ear in the skin crease and the resulting surgical scar is usually not noticeable after a few months.

The so-called "downtime" after this procedure is about a week. However it is perfectly possible to go back to work after a few days if this is really necessary.

## Aftercare

Following surgery a headband will be advised to be worn for a few weeks at night. As with all surgery bleeding or infection may occur. Infection is unusual and would normally be treated with antibiotics. It is important to understand that the degree of ear correction usually lessens slightly over the first few months after surgery. Therefore the ears are often a bit “over-corrected” initially. This is to accommodate the usual loosening up of the ears after surgery.

It is very important to understand that the degree of eventual correction of the ears is variable.

The important consideration is to have ears that are natural and pleasant to look at and which are on the whole, not noticeable. The aim should not be to have ears that are too close to the head. This looks unnatural and may for example make it difficult to wear glasses.

Occasionally the internal sutures that are placed underneath the skin start to come out. This can happen even well after the ear has healed, sometimes after a year. If this happens the stitches will need to be removed. Normally this does not affect the result.

A prominent scar behind the ear is unusual and would only normally result if the person concerned has a tendency to so-called “keloid” scarring. This refers to a prominent surgical scar, which can occur with some people because of the way their skin heals.

However most people who undergo surgery to correct outstanding ears are very pleased with the outcome and this applies to both adults and children.