

# Otoplasty (adult)

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This fact sheet is for general information about this procedure only. It is not intended to be used as medical advice or to replace advice that your relevant healthcare professional would give you. If you have a particular medical problem, please consult a healthcare professional.

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## What is an otoplasty?

An otoplasty (or pinnaplasty) is an operation to improve the appearance of your ears.

## Is an otoplasty suitable for me?

You are most likely to benefit from an otoplasty if one or more of the following conditions apply to you.

- You are self-conscious about the size or shape of your ears.
- You are being teased and this is causing you distress.
- You have unusually shaped ears.

An otoplasty will not improve your physical health. For this reason, the operation should be performed only if the aim is to improve your self-confidence and to make you more comfortable with your appearance.

## What are the benefits of surgery?

Your ears should have a better shape.

Most people who have a successful otoplasty are more comfortable with their appearance.

## Are there any alternatives to surgery?

For adults, surgery is the only option to change the shape of your ears.

## What does the operation involve?

The operation is usually performed under a local anaesthetic.

The operation usually takes about an hour.

Your surgeon will make a cut at the back of your ear and peel off some skin from the cartilage. They will change the shape of the cartilage so your ear lies closer to your head.

Through the same cut at the back of your ear, your surgeon may also make a cut just inside the cartilage so they can peel back the skin from the front of the cartilage and lightly score it. This technique tends to make the cartilage bend towards your head.

Your surgeon will pack your ears with moulding material and place a dressing on your head to give your ears support.

## How can I prepare myself for the operation?

If you smoke or use nicotine products, stopping smoking at least 6 weeks before and for 6 weeks after surgery may reduce your risk of developing complications and will improve your long-term health. Many surgeons will not perform surgery if you are still smoking or using nicotine products.

Try to maintain a healthy weight. You have a higher risk of developing complications if you are overweight.

Regular exercise should help to prepare you for the operation, help you to recover and improve your long-term health. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Speak to the healthcare team about any vaccinations you might need to reduce your risk of serious illness while you recover. When you come into hospital, practise hand washing and wear a face covering when asked.

## What complications can happen?

The healthcare team will try to reduce the risk of complications.

Any numbers which relate to risk are from studies of people who have had this operation. Your doctor may be able to tell you if the risk of a complication is higher or lower for you. Some risks are higher if you are older, obese, you are a smoker or have other health problems. These health problems include diabetes, heart disease or lung disease.

Some complications can be serious.

## General complications of any operation

- Bleeding after the operation. You may need another operation to stop the bleeding and prevent an unsightly cosmetic result.
- Infection, usually caused by bacteria from inside your ear getting into your wound.
- Allergic reaction to the equipment, materials or medication.
- Chest infection. Your risk will be lower if you have stopped smoking and you are free of Covid-19 (coronavirus) symptoms for at least 7 weeks before the operation.

## Specific complications of this operation

- Cosmetic problems. It is difficult to predict exactly how your ears will look after the operation.
- Cauliflower ear.

## Consequences of this procedure

- Pain.
- Scarring of the skin, which can be unsightly. The scars usually settle with time.

## How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home the same day or the day after.

For a few weeks, while the swelling and bruising settles, rest and do not do strenuous exercise.

You can return to work after the head dressing has been removed but you may want to wait another 1 to 2 weeks until it is difficult to tell that you have had surgery.

Do not play sports for 6 weeks.

The results of an otoplasty are usually permanent.

## Summary

An otoplasty is an operation to improve the appearance of your ears. The operation should be performed only if the aim is to improve your self-confidence and to make you more comfortable with your appearance. You should consider the options carefully and have realistic expectations about the results.

Keep this information document. Use it to help you if you need to talk to the healthcare team.

Some information, such as risk and complication statistics, is taken from global studies and/or databases. Please ask your surgeon or doctor for more information about the risks that are specific to you, and they may be able to tell you about any other suitable treatments options.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant healthcare team would give you.

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