

Ear Surgery/ Otoplasty;

Ear surgery, or otoplasty, is done to set back prominent ears closer to the patients head or to reduce the size of large ears. For the most part, the operation is done on children and women. Ears are almost fully grown by the age of five. The earlier the surgery, the less teasing and ridicule the child will have to endure. Ear surgery or otoplasty on adults is also commonly performed.

The prominent ear is often due to a lack of folding of the ear itself or a prominent cup of the ear called the chonchal bowel. Some patients require correction of both issues. Often there can be asymmetry between a pair of patients ears. If your asymmetry is significant to start with preoperatively do not expect identical ears after surgery.

Most surgeons recommend that parents stay aware of their child's feelings about protruding ears; don't insist on the surgery until your child wants the change. Children who feel uncomfortable about their ears and want the surgery are generally more cooperative during the process and happier with the result.

Ear surgery, or otoplasty, is usually performed as an outpatient procedure. Ear surgery usually takes about two to three hours to perform. Various techniques can be utilized and will depend on the problem. In one of the more common techniques, the surgeon makes a small incision in the back of the ear to expose the ear cartilage. The surgeon will then sculpt the cartilage and bend it back toward the head. Non-removable stitches may be used to help maintain the new shape. Occasionally, the surgeon will have to remove a larger piece of cartilage (chonchal bowl) to provide a more natural-looking ear when the surgery is complete. Another technique involves a similar incision only in the back of the ear. Skin is removed and stitches are used to fold the cartilage back on itself to reshape the ear without removing any cartilage. Even when only one ear appears to protrude, surgery is usually performed on both ears for better symmetry.

Often the patient's head will be wrapped in a bulky bandage immediately following surgery to promote the best molding and healing. Within a few days, the bulky bandages are replaced by a lighter head dressing similar to a headband. Be sure to follow your surgeon's directions for wearing the headband, especially at night.

Stitches are usually removed, or will dissolve, in about a week to 10 days. Any activity in which the ear might be bent forward should be avoided for a month or so. Most adults can go back to work about four days after surgery. Children can go back to school after seven days, if they're careful about playground activity.

There are a variety of other ear problems that can be helped with surgery. These include: lop ear, cupped ear and shell ear. Surgery can also improve large or stretched earlobes, lobes with large creases and wrinkles, or torn ear lobes. Ask your plastic surgeon about the effectiveness of surgery for your specific case.

Most patients are thrilled with the results of ear surgery. But keep in mind, the goal is improvement, not perfection. Don't expect both ears to match perfectly. If you've discussed your concerns and your expectations with the plastic surgeon before the operation, chances are, you'll be quite pleased with the result.