



GOLD COAST
Plastic Surgery



Your comprehensive guide to

OTOPLASTY

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Otoplasty

Otoplasty or ear correction surgery, is performed to move prominent or protruding ears closer to the head or to reduce the size of large ears. Otoplasty surgery can also alter large or stretched earlobes or lobes with large creases and wrinkles. Your surgeon can even build new ears for people who were born without them or who have lost them through injury.

Other ear problems that can be helped with otoplasty surgery include:

- lop ear – when the tip seems to fold down and forward
- cupped ear – a very small ear
- shell ear – when the curve in the outer rim, as well as the natural folds and creases, are missing.

Am I a candidate for otoplasty?

Otoplasty is mostly commonly performed on children between the ages of four and 14 years. The operation is usually done for psychological reasons on children to reduce the chance that the child may be bullied or teased. Ear surgery on adults is also possible and there are generally no additional risks associated with ear surgery on an adult.

You or your child might be a candidate for ear correction surgery if you/they have:

- Prominent ears that stick out from your head
- Ears that are malformed in any way or shape
- One ear is more prominent than the other
- Ears missing one of its folds
- An earlobe more prominent than the rest of the ear.

It is very important to communicate with your surgeon before the operation to make certain you have realistic expectations of the outcome.

What to expect

Otoplasty begins with an incision made behind the ear. The cartilage is re-shaped and then sutured or “pinned back” into place. When the position and desired shape has been achieved, the ears are dressed and left to heal. The procedure takes one to two hours to complete. The exact length of procedure will depend on your age, your ears and your desired outcome.

The operation

During the otoplasty surgery your surgeon will take the fold of skin behind the ear and cut it to expose the underlying cartilage. The excess cartilage is then removed. In some cases, the cartilage is remodelled. As an example, your surgeon may reshape the cartilage by folding it back and stitching it in place. Incisions (cuts) are closed with stitches. The essence of the otoplasty operation is that the approach is from behind the ear and therefore no scars appear on the front of the ear.

The ear cartilage is reshaped from behind and is held in the new position with stitches. Once the new shape is achieved you will have stitches behind your ears for approximately 5 to 7 days.

Recovery

When surgery is completed, you will be taken into a recovery area where you will continue to be closely monitored. You will have a bandage on your head, which will stay in place for anywhere from 3 to 7 days. Once you have recovered from the anaesthetic you may have a drink and a light refreshment. You will be able to go home after a few hours, although some patients may stay overnight in the hospital or surgical facility.

After the operation

It is important to realise that recovery time varies greatly among individuals. Otoplasty is not a particularly painful operation but you will have some discomfort, which is usually controlled by pain relief medication for approximately two days. You will have stitches along the incisions, which will be removed after five to seven days. Once the head bandage is removed, you can have a shower.

Swelling and bruising

There will be some post-operative bruising and swelling which will subside over approximately two weeks.

Pain

There is surprisingly little pain but any discomfort you may feel will be controlled by pain relief medication.

Desired results

As the healing process is gradual you should expect to wait at least several weeks to get an accurate picture of the results of your ear surgery. Incisions will fade over a number of months until they become barely visible.

Resuming normal activities

You should be able to get back to most physical activities within two weeks. This excludes contact sports, which you will be able to resume six weeks after the operation

Risks

Each year thousands of men and women undergo successful ear correction surgery (otoplasty) procedures, experience no major problems and are happy with the results. Significant complications from ear correction surgery are infrequent. However, make sure you understand what surgery involves, including possible risks, complications and follow-up care.

Otoplasty surgery poses various risks, including:

- Bleeding - usually only mild oozing from the edges of the skin and stops by itself
- Incomplete correction of the prominence
- Asymmetry - perfect symmetry of the ears is very difficult to achieve and slight differences between the two ears may occur.

Like any major surgery, a otoplasty poses a risk of bleeding, infection and an adverse reaction to anaesthesia. It's also possible to have an allergic reaction to the surgical tape or other materials used during or after the procedure. You can help minimise certain risks by following the advice and instructions of your surgeon, both before and after your ear correction surgery.

If you have any concerns about the risks involved with ear correction surgery, please consult your surgeon.



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