

Patient Advice Sheet on Pinnaplasty
by Mr P H Jones, Consultant, & Mrs A K Bieger-Farhan, SpR,
Department of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery
South Manchester University Hospitals NHS Trust
July 2003

What are prominent ears?

Yours ears are made of skin covering cartilage or gristle. The gristle is folded. This gives your ears their shape. Prominent ears are often known as bat ears. Bat ears don't have one of the folds. So they stick out. Sometimes one more than the other.

What does pinnaplasty mean?

Pinnaplasty means reshaping your ear. Otoplasty means the same.

How does the operation work?

We change the shape of the gristle. This makes the missing fold. This makes the ear closer to the head. There are different ways to do this. The scar is behind the ear. It can't easily be seen.

Do you take photographs?

We ask you to go to the medical illustration department. They take pictures before and after the operation. They are a record of the shape of your ears. We keep them in the notes. We can use them to teach only if you let us. The pictures won't have your name on.

Do I have to have this operation?

No. It is up to you. We call it elective. Without the operation your ear will stay as they are.

What if I don't have the operation?

Your ears will stay as they are.

What are the alternatives?

The only alternative is not to have the operation.

Why do I have to wait for the operation?

We usually wait until you ask. We can't operate if only Mum & Dad want your ears looking nicer.

What can go wrong?

A blood clot can collect under the skin. This causes more pain or more bleeding into the bandage. You may require an operation to remove the clot. Your ears may get infected. They will be painful, swollen, hot & red. You will need antibiotics. Both bleeding & infection may cause a cauliflower ear. The gristle loses stiffness and shrinks. The repair may not work properly. Another operation may be needed. The scar may swell up a lot. This may need more treatment. You may not like the result. There is a limit to what we can do. You need to know this.

Can anything serious happen?

Serious complications are very uncommon. All operations and anaesthetics have risks. Some are serious. The risks are similar to those of everyday life. Examples are flying on holiday, driving in a car or walking down a street.

What will my ears look like afterwards?

Your ears will be an odd colour when the bandage comes off. This is caused by bruising and the yellow antiseptic dressing. A tight dressing may cause a small break in the skin. This can take some time to heal.

How long will I be in hospital and off work?

You will usually be in for the day or as an overnight stay. Take one week off work or school.

Will I be asleep?

Usually you are. This is called general anaesthesia. The doctor who makes you go to sleep is called an anaesthetist. He or she will tell you about your anaesthetic. We can do the operation with a local anaesthetic. We use an injection to freeze the ear. Then there is no pain.

Will there be anything in my ear afterwards?

We dress your ears with cotton wool padding. It is soaked with a yellow antiseptic.

Will there be a bandage? How long is it on for?

There is a bandage on for 7 to 10 days. You cannot wash your hair while it is on. We take the bandage off. You wear a headband at night for a few weeks more. A tennis band will do. This stops your ears bending in your sleep.

Are there any stitches? When do they come out? Who takes them out?

Usually we use dissolvable stitches. You do not need to have them taken out. If not, we take them out when the bandage comes off.

Will my ears be sore?

There is usually little pain for a day or so. DO NOT TAKE ASPIRIN IF YOU ARE UNDER 16. Paracetamol can be taken if needed. If the pain increases badly you should call us. We must have a look at your ears.

What will I feel like afterwards?

Your ears may feel numb for a few weeks

What do I need to avoid afterwards?

Avoid contact sports for two months.

When will you need to look at my ears again? How often? For how long?

We will see you at 7 to 10 days to remove the bandage. We see you once more. This will be a month or more later. We arrange for the photographs.

May I ask a question?

At any time. You can also refuse to have the operation at any time. If you ask a question please ask someone suitable. A junior doctor or nurse may not know what you want to know. Please do not ask several doctors the same question and compare answers.