

Information leaflet for parents/carers

Prominent ears

Otoplasty operation



What are prominent ears?

Prominent ears can sometimes be called “Bat ears” “lop ears” or “protruding ears”. They can run in families, but do not usually cause any problems with hearing.

They may be unilateral (one-sided) or bilateral (both sided). If the ears do not look the same then this can lead to reduced self-esteem and teasing at school.

Pinnaplasty or Otoplasty operations are usually done after five/six years of age or if your child thinks this is a problem. Your GP will usually make a referral to a specialist doctor who can operate on ears. This is usually a Plastic surgeon or an ENT surgeon.

The operation to repair prominent ears is called an Otoplasty. This operation involves reshaping the skin and cartilage behind the ear so that it makes the ear(s) look less prominent.

What will the doctors tell me and my child?

You will be given an out-patient appointment with your child’s doctor who will give you more information about the operation. They will answer any questions or worries that you may have about the operation. They will also explain the risks and benefits of both a local or general Anaesthetic. Your child will need to go for Clinical photographs and you may also be asked to sign a Consent form for the operation.

Will my child be awake or asleep for the operation?

Your child's doctor will decide if your child will need a General Anaesthetic. Sometimes if your child is old enough they may have this operation done under a Local Anaesthetic. This is nothing to worry about and is usually very safe for your child.

What does the operation involve?

In both operations the surgeon will make a small incision (cut) behind the ear, they will then reshape the ear. Both general and local Anaesthetic operations use dissolvable stitches that do not need to be removed after surgery. Your child will usually be given a local Anaesthetic whilst they are in theatre which will keep your child comfortable and pain free after their surgery.

What can I expect my child to look like after the operation?

After prominent ear surgery your child will need to have a bandage on their head which covers one or both ears. This is to protect the wounds following surgery and to prevent any infection. The bandages are usually kept in place for about a week.

You will be given an out-patient appointment with the plastic surgery nurses one week after surgery for the bandage to be removed.

Sometimes it does not matter how secure the bandage is the bandage will come off your child's head.

Please do not worry if this happens. It will not harm your child's ears but to save you coming to back to the hospital on numerous occasions or going to your GP, you can remove the bandage.

We advise that you **DO NOT** replace this as this can be put on too tight and may cause further injury to your child's ears which may be already swollen and bruised.

If the bandages do come off after 48 hours please do not wash your child's hair until you have seen the plastic surgery nurses in clinic.

Please make sure that your child does not knock or bang their ear(s) when playing with other siblings.

How will my Child feel after surgery?

Once your child has recovered from the Aneasethic or their operation they should be able to eat and drink normally and you will be allowed to go home.

Pain relief will be offered to keep your child comfortable but they should be pain free for at least four hours post operation due to the local Aneasethic which has been given in theatre.

Your child may complain of feeling hot, sweaty and itchy over their ears. This can be particularly troublesome in the warm weather.

Please encourage them not to scratch or itch as this may cause trauma around the wound site and may cause some bleeding either onto the bandage or you may find that this is on one of their fingers.

We would recommend a cool fan just allowing cool air around their head or having a bedroom window open to keep them cool just until the bandage is removed.

If the bandage stays in place then it is important that you keep this clean and dry for as long as possible.

Give your child Paracetamol if they require this to keep them comfortable at home.

No fighting with other siblings as this could damage to the ears.

If your child becomes unwell at home what can I do?

- Keep your child comfortable by giving regular pain relief if they require this. However if pain relief is not sufficient then you will need to contact the plastic surgery team at the hospital.
- Your child does not develop a high temperature of 38C and this is not relieved by Paracetamol
- Your child does not drink any fluids.
- Your child complains of redness or reports any bleeding through the bandage or onto their neck.
- The skin around the bandage becomes red and itchy and hotter than normal.

After the bandage has been removed then what can I expect to happen?

Your child will need to wear a soft headband at night for **two** weeks only. This is to avoid damaging the ears whilst they are asleep.

Your child may find it difficult to sleep in a comfortable position at night for the first few nights so we would recommend some extra pillows or a "V" shaped pillow to help take the pressure off their ears.

Once the bandage has been removed in the nurse led clinic, you may wash your child's hair with normal shampoo and conditioner. You will need to get your child to lie with their head back so that you follow the hair line around the ear(s) Your child's ear(s) may look bruised and swollen for a couple of weeks but this will settle down. Every child is unique and some children may have more bruising than you would expect. Please don't worry, but reassure your child that this will settle down and the ear(s) will go back to their normal size.

If you dry your child's hair with a hair dryer please use a cool setting as a warm setting may be uncomfortable. Leaving the hair to dry naturally will help after this operation.

Be careful when brushing their hair as this may be a bit sore if you catch their ear.

Your child should be able to return to school after the bandage has been removed but they must not do any contact sports for at least 6 weeks after surgery. This includes any contact sports such as rugby, kick boxing.

We recommend No swimming for at least 4-6 weeks after their operation.

You will need to return back to the hospital in three months' time to see your child's Consultant. This is to make sure that the ear(s) are healing well.

Are there any complications following this operation?

Complications are generally very rare following this operation however some children can:-

- Develop Keloid scars behind their ears which are thick itchy scars behind their ears.
- Numbness which can take several weeks to recover
- One ear is further back than the other one and your child may not like the appearance.
- A small clot of blood behind the ear called a Haematoma may develop under the scar line
- The wound may come apart due to Infection which may result in your child having oral or intra venous antibiotics for a week or two.
- There may be recurrence of the prominent ear. This may require further surgery at a later date.
- If any of these complications occur your Consultant will be able to advise you further on the management of the ear(s) on your three month outpatient appointment.

If you need any further advice or information then please contact the plastic surgery nursing team

Monday to Friday 8am – 4pm: 0121 333 8117 or 0121 333 8137
Plastic Reg on call through hospital switchboard on
0121 333 9999

Looking after and sharing information about your child

We have a duty of care to help patients and families understand how information about them is kept and shared and we include the following information in all our patient leaflets:

Information is collected about your child relevant to their diagnosis, treatment and care. We store it in written records and electronically on computer. As a necessary part of that care and treatment we may have to share some of your information with other people and organisations who are either responsible or directly involved in your child's care. This may involve taking your child's information off site. We may also have to share some of your information for other purposes; such as research etc. Any information that is shared in this way will not identify your child unless we have your consent. If you have any questions and/or do not want us to share that information with others, please talk to the people looking after your child or contact PALS (Patient Advice and Liaison Service) on 0121 333 8403.

Birmingham Women's and Children's NHS Foundation Trust
Steelhouse Lane Birmingham B4 6NH
Telephone 0121 333 9999
Fax: 0121 333 9998
Website: www.bwc.nhs.uk

Author: Deb Jones
Produced: Dec 17
Review Date: Dec 2021
Version 1.0.0
CPADS: 60274

