

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - PROMINENT EAR SURGERY - OTOPLASTY

1. What is Otoplasty?

Otoplasty literally means Plastic Surgery of the Ears. Conventionally though it refers to the reconstructive surgery of the congenital abnormalities of the external portion of the ears. The most common of these is the correction of the prominent ears. These are colloquially also called 'Bat ears'. Generally speaking the procedure is requested by parents of pre-school or school going children who may be teased by their peers. These kids are generally self conscious and in some instances very shy and introverted solely due to the constant teasing of their friends. Young adults will often wear their hair in ways that will hide the ears. Many parents have admitted that the personality of their child had blossomed after Otoplasty surgery. There have also been reports of noted improvement in school grades and sporting activities. The surgery is commonly performed on both ears in one operation and the results are satisfying to both the patient and their parents. Dr Gahankari also has performed this operation on young adults whose self image has been boosted dramatically following the procedure.

2. What is actually done in Otoplasty?

Dr Gahankari usually performs this operation under general anaesthetic although in adults, he also offers twilight light general anaesthesia. All incisions are placed behind the ear so there are no visible scars after the operation. The protruding ears' cartilages are exposed and are scored to change their shape. The natural curves and folds are recreated. Missing or abnormal sections of the ear may be constructed from tissues taken from other parts of the ear or from other areas of the body. Ears that are thickened after injury such as boxing may need sculpting. At the end of the operation a pressure bandage is used.

Children are operated usually after or around age six. At this age the development of the ear is nearly completed and the child is cooperative enough to follow the instructions.

3. Where are the scars?

The scars are generally in the inconspicuous place as behind the ear or within the natural folds and curvatures of the ear structure. Dr Gahankari will discuss with you the incisions he plans on making for your desired results. Some removal of cartilage may be necessary.

4. What is usual post-operative care?

The pressure dressing is removed after five to seven days. Children are kept relatively quiet during that time. Outdoor sports activities are also avoided. If necessary, pain killers are administered by mouth. The dressing should not get wet. After removal of the dressing, a broad head band is worn for another two to three weeks continuously, and subsequently at night for another three weeks or so. This is to control the swelling and bruising on the ears until the end of the sixth post-operative week. Patients are advised not to sleep on his/her side for at least 3 weeks. Contact sports and strenuous physical exercises may be commenced at the end of the sixth post-operative week.

5. How about pain, swelling and bruising?

Most of the swelling normally subsides within a week, but the ears may remain bruised up to three weeks and mildly sore up to four to six weeks. They will be a bit sensitive to light pressure for about 3 weeks.

Some patients are prone to bruising more than others. There is normally very little pain involved post-operatively. In fact the skin over the ears may be slightly numb for several weeks to months

6. At what stage after the operation are the results noticeable?

It is important not to tamper with the dressings in the first week to prevent possibility of the infection. Despite the bruising, the correction of the prominent

ears is obvious even at the first week mark. Usually the results are best appreciated at about the six week mark.

7. What are the risks and complications of Otoplasty?

Every surgery has some risks from the surgery and the anaesthetic. The specific risks of the otoplasty operation are bleeding (or a clot) and infection. Very rarely, but if the cartilage is infected, further surgery and drainage may be needed. Generally in young healthy patients complications are exceedingly uncommon. With proper post-operative care, the risk of the complications is very minimal.