



## Setting back of Prominent Ears (Pinnaplasty or Otoplasty)

Approximately 1% of the population consider their ears to be too prominent. In many cases a family trend can be seen. Most prominent ears lack a normal fold of cartilage, and sometimes one ear is more prominent than the other. Children with prominent ears are sometimes teased at school.

### What can be done?

Ear surgery is usually carried out to set prominent ears back closer to the head. The surgery adjusts the shape of the cartilage within the ear to create the missing folds.

### What are the limitations?

The operation is usually carried out on children between the ages of five and 15. When children are less than five years old the cartilage tends to be very floppy and does not hold stitches well. Older children are also generally more co-operative when they fully understand what the surgery involves.

### What does the surgery involve?

Ear surgery usually takes about two hours although complicated procedures may take longer. A small incision is made in the back of the ear to expose the ear cartilage. The cartilage is then sculpted and bent back towards the head. Permanent stitches may be used to help maintain the new shape of the cartilage. The surgery leaves a feint scar in the back of the ear that fades with time.

In children surgery is usually carried out under general anaesthesia (ie you are put to sleep completely). For older children or adults it may be possible to carry out the surgery under local anaesthesia (ie injections in and around the ear) often in combination with intravenous sedation (a sedative injected through a vein).

### What can I expect immediately after surgery?

Children are usually up and around within a few hours of surgery although they often stay in hospital overnight until all the effects of the general anaesthetic wear off. The ears are wrapped in a large bandage after the operation to help the moulding and healing. The ears may ache for a few days but this can be relieved with simple painkillers (eg Paracetamol, Ibuprofen). The bandages are removed after around 10 days. Any necessary stitches are also removed at this time. A lighter head dressing similar to a headband is often suggested, particularly at night, for several further weeks. Any activity in which the ear might be bent should be avoided for a month or so.

### Do I need to take any time off work or school?



Most children can go back to school after a week but they still need to be careful about playground activity. If you are older and work you will also need a week or so off during which time you should avoid strenuous exercise. It is important to remember that you will not be able to drive or operate machinery for 48 hours after a general anaesthetic and 24 hours after intravenous sedation.