

Otoplasty brochure copy

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Definition

Otoplasty is a reconstructive procedure to change the appearance of the *pinna*, or external ears. The most common otoplasty is known as “ear pinning,” though it can also involve reshaping or reconstructing deformed or damaged ears.

The pinna is a thin cartilage structure covered with skin. The individual folds and structures of the pinna can be identified by name, and surgeries to correct the overall appearance of the ears involve a combination of moving, reshaping, adding or removing these elements to provide a more aesthetically pleasing silhouette. (Otoplasty does not affect hearing.)

A person’s ears are typically full-sized by the age of 5 or 6, making the protrusion seem more extreme during formative years. Having ears that are too large or that protrude more than the average person’s can have long-lasting psychological effects and lead to lower self-esteem, self-consciousness, and trouble adjusting to school.

Otoplasty is typically an outpatient procedure. Younger children may be given anesthesia, but older children and adults may only receive a local anesthetic and a sedative, which allows the patient to be awake but relaxed. Even if only one ear is large or protruding, the surgeon may elect to do surgery on both ears for a more natural outcome. Though more complex procedures may take longer, the surgery usually takes around three hours.

Candidates

Most healthy individuals with realistic expectations are candidates for otoplasty.

It is generally considered best if otoplasty is performed early. The reason is twofold: a) the cartilage in a child’s ears is more pliable and allows the surgeon greater latitude in molding the ears, and b) because of the psychological trauma that can be associated with having atypical ears, children who have the surgery early will avoid the teasing that can lead to self-consciousness. However, it is important that parents be aware of their child’s feelings with regard to their appearance and only move forward with the procedure when the child has expressed displeasure with their ears and is ready to undergo the procedure.

Though most otoplasty operations are performed on children ages 4 to 14, adults can also benefit from otoplasty.

How Will I Look?

The results you can expect from otoplasty vary by your age and the severity of your irregularity. Most people with atypical ear shapes or mild deformities can expect great improvement in their appearance and self-esteem. It is unlikely that your ears will be perfectly symmetrical;

however, natural ears are never perfect. Scaring is usually mild and hidden by the natural shape of the ear. Your doctor can give you a realistic idea of what to expect.

Causes

- Heredity
- Congenital Abnormalities (microtia, lop-ear, etc.)
- Accident or Trauma

Outcome

- Improved Appearance
- Improved Self-Esteem
- Improved Self-Confidence

About the Surgery

Classic Otoplasty An incision is made behind the ear in the crease where your ear attaches to your scalp. The surgeon will remove, adjust or mold the structure of the ear and use stitches to hold it in place and may even use sutures to anchor them to a more desired location until they've healed.

Incisionless Otoplasty Using a needle, the surgeon will score along the anterior surface of the cartilage and use it as a "mini-knife" under the skin to model the cartilage and place the sutures that will hold the modifications in place.

Recovery

Adults should arrange for transportation from the hospital or surgeon's office and ask a friend or loved one to stay the night after surgery. Depending on the situation, some people may be asked to stay in the hospital overnight. Most patients experience numbness, slight swelling, itching and discoloration, which can be reduced with medication. Your ears will be dressed to hold them in place and protect them. You may wash your face and hair when the dressings are removed, but don't wear earrings or glasses (if possible) or engage in activities in which your ears might be bent or struck until they have completely healed. Rest is important in the healing process, and you will probably be asked to wear an elastic band at night (and during the day when possible) for several weeks. Your doctor will prescribe antibiotics and pain medication after your surgery, and you should clean the wound regularly according to your doctor's instructions after the dressings are removed to reduce scarring. Adults and children can return to regular activities within a week or two, though some activities may be restricted.