



## ear reshaping (*otoplasty*)

When considering cosmetic surgery, it is important that you are fully informed on all aspects of the procedure that you are seeking.

### What is otoplasty?

In ear reshaping (also known as otoplasty, pinnaplasty or bat-ear correction) the cartilage of the ear is reshaped so that the ear lies closer to the side of the head. It is estimated that up to 25% of the population consider that their ears stick out too much.

Often, it is clear that this trait has been inherited. Occasionally only one ear is prominent, although it is usual for both to be affected. People with so called 'bat-ears' are often teased, especially during childhood and adolescence.

### Who is suitable for ear reshaping?

If the problem is spotted shortly after birth, then it is possible to treat the condition conservatively, merely by applying the appropriate splint. However, within a few months, the cartilage of the ear has become considerably stiffer, and the splint may have to be in place for many months, and even then may not be successful. Generally by the age of six months, the only option is surgical correction.

### What to think about at this stage?

Most surgeons recommend waiting until after about five years of age to correct prominent ears.

### How is ear reshaping performed?

In adults, the operation is usually performed under either local anaesthesia alone, or local anaesthesia with sedation. In children, a general anaesthetic is usually administered. An incision is made behind the ear, in the groove between the ear and the side of the head.

This leaves a well hidden scar. If the lobe of the ear is also large, then it is possible to reduce its size at the same operation. It takes about sixty to ninety minutes. Many patients go home the same day, but an overnight stay in hospital is recommended if performed under general anaesthetic. If your work is not physical, expect to return to work in two to three weeks.

### Following the operation

As with all surgery, you must expect to feel bruised and sore immediately afterwards. Simple paracetamol is usually all that is required. Most patients experience that their ears are tender for several weeks following surgery. A head dressing is usually worn for about ten days, at which time sutures are removed as necessary.



# Profile

cosmetic surgery

Most surgeons recommend that patients continue to wear a protective headband at night. If so, this is usually worn for about one month. The hair may be washed once the dressing and sutures have been removed. At all times it is important to keep the area behind the ear clean.

Over several months, the scar settles well in almost all patients. However, in a small minority (less than 3%), it may become red and a little lumpy. This may require further treatment. A small number of patients may require a minor adjustment to their operation if the repair fails to hold properly.

## **Risks and complications**

Cosmetic surgery is amongst the safest of medical procedures. However, all patients must understand and accept that no surgical procedure is absolutely free from risk. At consultation, your surgeon will discuss these risks with you.

## **How long will the results of your ear shaping last?**

For the great majority of patients, the results of their ear reshaping are permanent. As stated above, there is a small group of patients who may require a minor adjustment to their surgery.