

# Prominent ears

This leaflet offers more information to parents of children referred with prominent ears. It explains what prominent ears are, how they can be corrected and what to expect during and after surgery.

If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

## What are prominent ears?

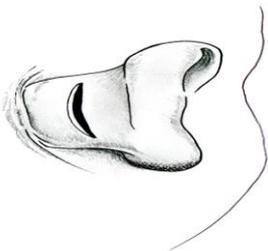
Ears naturally stand away from the side of the head, but in some cases they stick out more noticeably and in childhood can draw unwanted attention and be a focus for name calling and bullying.

Prominent ears are not linked to any medical condition, but can sometimes run in families. Having prominent ears does not impact on your child's hearing.

## What is a pinnaplasty?

Pinnaplasty is the medical term for an operation that can be done to correct prominent ears.

Your child will have their operation carried out under general anaesthetic. An incision (cut) will be made behind their ear and the skin and cartilage is then reshaped so the ears lie back closer to the head.



The incision made during the operation behind the ear



New position of the ear closer to the head

## What will happen at my child's outpatients' appointment?

The doctor will explain the procedure to you and your child. You will have the opportunity to ask questions about the procedure and follow up.

The doctor may also ask for your child to have photos taken in the medical photographic department. These will go in your child's notes so they can see the before and after comparison.

Your child will be added to the waiting list for their operation and you will be contacted by the admissions pathway coordinator to arrange a date.

## What will happen on the day of admission?

A pinnaplasty is carried out as a day case procedure, so you will be able to take your child home later the same day.

Your child will be admitted to one of the children's wards where the paediatric nurses will help prepare them for their operation and general anaesthetic. You will be able to speak to the anaesthetist.

While your child is asleep local anaesthetic will be injected around the ears so when they wake up they should be pain free. This usually last a few hours. It is important your child has some oral pain relief before the local anaesthetic wears off.

At the end of the operation, your child's wounds and ears will be protected either by a dressing and a bandage which goes around their head or surgical glue and a tubigrip headband. The dressing and bandage will need to stay in place until your child is reviewed in the paediatric dressing clinic one or two weeks after their operation. The tubigrip headband may be removed for showering and during the day.

Once the ward nurses are happy your child has recovered from the anaesthetic and they have met the discharge criteria they will be allowed to go home.

## Asking for your consent

It is important that you feel involved in decisions about your child's care. You will be asked to sign a consent form to say that you agree for your child to have the treatment and understand what it involves. You can withdraw your consent at any time, even if you have said 'yes' previously. If you would like more details about our consent process, please ask for a copy of our policy.

## What are the risks?

All operations carry a small risk of infection and adverse reaction to the anaesthetic. To help reduce the risk of infection, a single dose of antibiotics will be given at the time of your child's operation. You will also have an opportunity to speak with the anaesthetist on the day of the surgery, to ask any questions or raise any concerns you have about the general anaesthetic.

After the operation, it is normal for the ears to look bruised and swollen. It can take a few weeks for this to settle and subside, so the final look of the ears shouldn't be judged until then.

Occasionally, the ear (usually just one) can return to its original prominent position. Your child may require a second operation at a later stage to correct this. Ears are unique, and they may be asymmetrical before surgery and afterwards. This is normal.

The scar that forms behind the ear may be red and lumpy at first, and can take a little time to settle and flatten. Rarely, this scar may stay red and slightly raised, (a hypertrophic scar) or may thicken and get lumpy, (a keloid scar). If this happens it is important for your child to be referred back to the plastic surgery team so they can advise you on how to manage it.

## Will my child have any pain?

The local anaesthetic that has been injected into the area will keep your child comfortable for the first few hours after their operation. It is important your child has some oral pain relief before the local anaesthetic wears off.

It is recommended that you give your child regular painkillers such as paracetamol and ibuprofen for two to three days after the surgery. For further advice, please speak to your doctor or GP or call the **Medicines Information Patient Helpline on 020 8725 1033**.

## What do we need to do when we go home?

If your child has any bleeding or an increase in pain please contact the plastic surgery team. If at any point during the first week after surgery the dressing falls off, please do not try and replace it or pull it down yourself. Please contact the ward you were discharged from to arrange for them to replace it or attend the emergency department (ED or A&E) at St Georges Hospital.

## Will there be a follow up appointment?

### Dressing clinic review

Usually after this review, it will be fine for your child's ears to be left exposed during the day. It is important that they protect the new position of the ears at night for six weeks following surgery. This is done by wearing a tubigrip headband or a soft towelling sports headband at night time.

It is OK for your child to wash their hair but they should take care not to rub their ears vigorously during washing or drying the hair. It is also important to make sure the area behind their ears is completely dry. This can be done by gently aiming a hairdryer on a cool setting behind the ears.

For the first six weeks after surgery, your child needs to take great care to protect their ears. During this time:

- they should not go swimming
- they should not take part in contact sports
- they should not expose their ears to direct sunlight. They should wear a hat in the sun and avoid situations where their ears may get knocked or pulled.

### Follow up with surgeon

As well as the one week follow up, you will also be seen by the surgeon in the outpatients department approximately six weeks after the operation.

## Useful sources of information

### The British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons

[www.baaps.org.uk/procedures/setting-back-prominent-ears](http://www.baaps.org.uk/procedures/setting-back-prominent-ears)

### British Association of Plastic Reconstruction and Aesthetic Surgeons

[www.bapras.org.uk/public/patient-information/surgery-guides/ear-surgery/prominent-ears](http://www.bapras.org.uk/public/patient-information/surgery-guides/ear-surgery/prominent-ears)

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's operation, wound or dressing, please contact the ward they were discharged from:

**Nicholls ward on 020 8725 3389 or 020 8725 2098**

**Freddie Hewitt ward on 020 8725 2074**

**Pinckney ward on 020 8725 2082**

**Jungle ward, (Monday to Friday, 7.30am to 8pm) on 020 8725 2034.**

You can also contact the paediatric plastic surgery clinical nurse specialist on 020 8725 2656 and leave a message on the answerphone. If your query/concern is urgent please don't leave a message but contact the ward you were discharged from.

For follow up appointments in the paediatric plastic dressing clinic please contact the plastic surgery appointment desk on 020 8725 5855.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.stgeorges.nhs.uk](http://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk)

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## Additional services

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing (near the lift foyer).

**Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** [pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

### NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

**Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

**Tel:** 111

