

Meatoplasty Surgery

This leaflet explains more about meatoplasty surgery, including the benefits, risks and any alternatives and what you can expect when you come to hospital.

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

What is meatoplasty?

This is a procedure to widen the opening of the ear canal. This can be done under local anesthetic or you can be put to sleep under a general anesthetic.

Why should I have meatoplasty surgery?

This surgery is often offered to patients with very narrow ear canals who have problems with the build-up of ear wax or who get a lot of outer ear infections. It can also be offered to patients who are undergoing or have had mastoid surgery in the past.

What are the benefits of meatoplasty surgery?

The main aims of the surgery are:

1. Increase the size of the ear canal opening
2. To help prevent recurrent ear infections
3. To help dry up a chronically leaking ear
4. To help make ear wax clearance easier.

What are the risks?

The operation is done under a general anaesthetic and all operations under a general anaesthetic carry a small risk. You will be able to discuss this with your anaesthetist on the day of the surgery.

As with all surgery, there are some associated risks.

- The operated area can take four to eight weeks to heal. This may be longer for patients who have diabetes or who actively smoke. During this time of healing it is common for the ear to leak a small amount of blood-stained discharge.
- The wound site can become infected. If you get an infection this would likely affect how quickly your ear heals.
- Scarring – the ear entrance skin will scar and look different to the opposite ear, but most people don't notice these changes.
- Rarely patients can experience numbness around the edges of the wound site.
- Occasionally patients can develop an allergy to the dressing that is used inside the ear to help it heal.

Are there any alternatives?

There is no other way to widen the outer ear canal. If you choose not to have the procedure, you may continue to have problems with ear infections and require microsuction to remove ear wax.

How can I prepare for meatoplasty surgery?

- Arrange two weeks off work (if you require a sickness certificate please ask the nurse on the day of your surgery).
- Arrange for someone to come and pick you up after the surgery. This is because you cannot drive for 24 hours after a general anaesthetic. Occasionally the procedure is performed under local anaesthetic.
- Bring with you all the medication you are currently taking on the day of your surgery.
- Make you sure you have pain killers at home such as paracetamol and ibuprofen (unless your GP has told you can't take these drugs).

- Inform the hospital if you have a cold, flu or tonsillitis in the two weeks before admission as your operation may need to be postponed.

Asking for your consent

It is important that you feel involved in decisions about your care. For some treatments, you will be asked to sign a consent form to say that you agree 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 happens during meatoplasty surgery?

Please remember that your surgeon will confirm how your surgery is performed and finalise your aftercare plan with you, as practices sometimes vary slightly. The below is a general guide.

The operation takes around 40 to 60 minutes. We would expect you to be able to go home on the same day. Always bring an overnight bag just in case. The surgery is performed by making a few small cuts in the ear canal entrance and removing some the excess skin, tissue and very occasionally bone.

Will I feel any pain?

It is common to experience a dull, occasionally throbbing pain in the ear after the surgery. Most patients don't require more than simple painkillers.

What happens after meatoplasty surgery?

There will often be a yellow antiseptic ribbon in the ear canal to protect things while healing takes place. There is often a squelching sound or popping in the ear when chewing or yawning but this is normal. The ear will often leak fluid for several days to weeks after the surgery. This is also normal. Occasionally you may see bright red blood particularly in the first 24 to 72 hours after surgery. You may have to

have several changes of the ear canal dressings as the ear heals over several weeks.

What do I need to do after I go home?

- There will be cotton wool at the entrance to the canal and you need to change this when it gets soaked with liquid. This may be several times a day immediately after surgery but may be only once a day a few days after surgery. Please insert a new piece of cotton wool at least once a day.
- If the yellow wick that sits in the ear sticks to the cotton wool, slowly pull off the wool and push the wick back down your ear canal with your little finger. Trim any excess wick with a pair of scissors. Make sure you wash your hands with soap and water before touching the ear or dressing.
- Try to sneeze with your mouth open and don't blow your nose for the first two weeks after surgery to prevent build-up of pressure in the ear. Sniff if you need to.
- There will be paper-like strips if you have a wound behind the ear. You can remove these gently after seven days.
- You should keep the ear dry until your surgeon tells you that you can get it wet: ask at your post-operative appointment. When washing hair, please cover the ear canal with a piece of cotton wool covered in Vaseline. In addition, you can use an empty clean yoghurt carton, or similar, to put over the ear and it is easier if there is someone to help you. Being able to go swimming depends upon type of surgery and healing speed, so please ask your surgeon.
- Work/school: You should be off work for seven to ten days, depending upon how you feel. One of the main reasons is to try to prevent you picking up a cold when mixing with other people.

If you feel up to it, and have the sort of job that allows, you may be able to work in about five days. If you need a medical certificate for

your employer, please ask your nurse before you leave hospital; otherwise, your GP can give you one.

Will I have a follow-up appointment?

Yes, you will be asked to return to the clinic to check your progress or to have any ear pack/dressing removed. Usually you will be asked to come to the clinic two to four weeks after the operation. You will be asked to go to ENT Outpatients in the Lanesborough Wing.

Your surgeon may insert another dressing into the ear to help it heal. Your surgeon will give you more precise instructions on the discharge letter you get when you go home after the operation.

Contact us

If you have questions or concerns, please contact your consultant's medical secretary on 020 8725 2052 or 020 8725 2493, or use the ENT secretarial email address:

stgh-tr.entsecretariesadmin@nhs.net.

If you have more urgent concerns or feel unwell, see your GP, an urgent care service, or your nearest Emergency Department.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

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 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** 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

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

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all of our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



Reference: ENT_MEA_01_LP **Published:** May 2021 **Review date:** May 2023