

Otoplasty can make a huge change in a person's appearance



Here are the pre-op and post op photographs of an otoplasty patient. Otoplasty is the surgical correction of prominent ears.

By DR. JONATHAN PONTELL
and JILL GALLOGLY

Otoplasty, the surgical correction of prominent ears, can make a huge change in a person's appearance and lead to greatly enhanced self-esteem. As we all remember from our school days, children can be very cruel.

Frequent harassment with the nicknames "Dumbo ears" or "Mickey Mouse ears" often follows children with prominent ears well into their adolescence. This is often very detrimental to their emotional well-being and can lead to self-consciousness, depression and resultant behavioral problems.

It is very desirable in children with extremely prominent ears to do this surgery prior to the start of school to prevent these emotional scars from forming.

The surgery, which can be performed under local or general anesthesia, involves incisions which are hidden in the creases behind the ears. Through these incisions, excessive cartilage can be removed and sutures placed to set the ears back against the scalp so that they project normally. Normal ear projection from the scalp is 15-20mm (1/2-3/4 inches). Sutures are also placed to recreate the proper folds and curves that are seen in normal, attractive ears.

Upon completion of the surgery, a bulky dressing is placed over the ears. This is changed the next day and replaced for two more days. Once this dressing is removed, a terrycloth headband is worn during sleep hours for the next month.

Patients are given pain medication and antibiotics for the first week. Post-operative pain is usually well controlled with minimal pain medication. Patients are told not to exert themselves for the first ten days. Normal activities can resume after this initial healing time.

Otoplasty can be performed on anyone five years of age or over. One must wait until five years to allow for the ears to reach the majority of their mature size.

While otoplasty is the most common cosmetic surgery done in children, many adolescents and adults undergo the procedure as well. Occasionally it is done on just one side, if the opposite ear projects normally. Adults who undergo otoplasty almost universally state that they wish they had done it as a child.

While purely cosmetic otoplasty is not covered by insurance, some ear deformities whether congenital (appearing at birth) or from trauma may be covered.

Otoplasty is a relatively simple procedure which can have extremely significant, positive effects on appearance and self-esteem in children and adults. If you feel you or your child would benefit from this procedure, please talk to your physician.