



Ear Plastic Surgery

Protruding and drooping ears or torn earlobes can be surgically corrected. Exceptionally large ears or those that stick out make children vulnerable to teasing. These procedures do not alter the patient's hearing, but they may improve appearance and self-confidence.

Corrective ear surgery, called otoplasty, should be considered on ears that stick out more than 4/5 of an inch (2 cm) from the back of the head. It can be performed at any age after the ears have reached full size, usually at five or six years of age. Having the surgery at a young age has two benefits: the cartilage is more pliable, making it easier to reshape, and the child will experience the psychological benefits of the cosmetic improvement. However, a patient may have the surgery at any age.

Those who are born without an ear, or lose an ear due to injury, can have an artificial ear surgically attached for cosmetic reasons. These are custom-formed to match the patient's other ear. Alternatively, rib cartilage or a biomedical implant, in addition to the patient's own soft tissue, can be used to construct a new ear.

Many mothers have had their earlobes torn by a baby's tug on their earrings. Earrings also catch on clothing and other objects, resulting in torn earlobes. These tears can be easily repaired surgically, usually in the doctor's office. In severe cases, the surgeon may cut a small triangular notch at the bottom of the lobe. A matching flap is then created from tissue on the other side of the tear, and the two wedges are fitted together and stitched. Earlobes usually heal quickly with minimal scarring. In most cases, the earlobe can be pierced again four to six weeks after surgery to receive light-weight earrings.

Otolaryngologist – head and neck surgeons can provide a complete evaluation and treatment options regarding otoplasty. An otolaryngologist can receive up to 15 years of college and post-graduate training in plastic surgery, concentrating on procedures that reconstruct the elements of the face. Because they study the complex anatomy, physiology, and pathology of the entire head and neck, these specialists (sometimes called ENTs) are uniquely qualified to perform the procedures that affect the whole face, head, and neck.

For more information or to find a head and neck surgeon near you, visit www.entnet.org.