



Patient Information

Patient Information – Following Major Ear Surgery

This information leaflet contains some information and instructions that you should follow after having major ear surgery.

After General Anaesthetic

After any surgery, especially after a general anaesthetic, you may feel tired and disorientated. You should not drive or operate machinery for 48 hours following surgery. Insurance companies may not cover you in the event of an accident occurring within a few days of surgery.

Dressings and Stitches

1. Stitches – these are dissolvable and do not need to be removed.
2. Dressings in the ear – There will be special dressings inside the ear canal. These are designed to keep everything in place after the operation. An Ear Nose and Throat (ENT) doctor or nurse will remove these at your first appointment after surgery and you should leave them alone. You should have an appointment within four weeks of your operation.
Avoid touching the dressing and do not allow anyone else to touch the area whilst it is healing. Don't worry if one or two pieces fall out in between the surgery and your appointment – there will be more pieces still inside.
You may also be given some ear drops to put in the ear canal, use them as directed.
3. Bandage - You may have a bandage with some padding around the ear when you go home. You can remove the bandage and the padding on the morning after surgery at home.
4. Wound dressings - The wound behind your ear will be covered with sticky paper strips (steristrips). You may remove these after a week if they are still there, don't worry if they have come off early.



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What might I experience after the operation?

Following ear surgery, it is expected that you may experience some or all of the following symptoms. Usually, these symptoms are temporary and settle within a few days but sometimes they can persist for weeks or longer:

- Noises in the ear (also known as tinnitus) – this might be ringing, buzzing, humming, roaring or squelching noises – this may be completely new, or it may be louder if you had tinnitus present before the operation.
- Dizziness or spinning sensation.
- Changes in taste – often a metallic taste.
- Hearing loss or muffled hearing, as though you are under water. Usually this will improve when the dressings are removed.
- Blood stained ear discharge – you may need to wear a dry cotton wool ball in the entrance of the ear for a few days. Change it for a fresh piece of cotton wool if it becomes blood soaked.
- Sharp shooting pains – you may require pain relief such as paracetamol or ibuprofen for a few days, always read packet instructions.

When can I wash my hair or get my ear wet?

Keep the inside of your ear and the wound dry until you are seen in clinic and the dressings are removed. You may wash your hair – we would suggest a “salon-style” method with your head placed backwards using some assistance is best. When you bathe or shower, place a dry cotton wool ball smeared in Vaseline into the entrance of the ear to stop moisture entering. When you have finished your bath or shower, remove the cotton wool and throw it away. Use a fresh cotton wool ball every time.

When will I be followed up?

The hospital will send you an outpatient appointment in the ENT clinic between two to six weeks after the operation unless your surgeon advises otherwise. You will have your first hearing test two to three months later. If you do not hear from the hospital within a few weeks of your operation please get in touch.

When can I fly?

Generally, it is safe to fly two weeks after having ear surgery, although we advise that you should not travel abroad for six weeks after undergoing ear surgery in case of complications or symptoms that may require you to seek specialist medical attention.

When can I swim?

Most ear surgery heals fully within three months, but this can vary. Ask the doctor at your next appointment about when they feel it is safe for you to swim.



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How long will I need off work/school?

One or two weeks is usually sufficient, but some people may return to work sooner depending on the type of work or activities they do.

Other specific advice

Avoid “popping” your ears. If your operation included repair or replacement of the bones of hearing you should also avoid any vigorous head movements such as shaking for six weeks.

What problems should I look out for?

Complications are uncommon following surgery but signs or symptoms that might indicate an infection or other surgical complication include:

- Fever (temperature more than 38°C)
- Prolonged or increasing discharge from the ear or wound (more than 1 week)
- Swelling with redness and pain around the ear
- Increasing pain
- Severe spinning dizziness
- Weakness on one side of the face

Please get in touch with the hospital if you notice any of these.

How do I get in touch?

If you need any further advice, we advise that you contact the hospital using the contact numbers below. Your first point of contact should be the ENT department during working hours Monday to Friday 8am to 4.30 pm. Outside of these hours please contact the ward from which you were discharged, your emergency GP service or the NHS helpline.

ENT clinic Nurse:	01793 604414	(As above)
Children’s Unit:	01793 604095	(24h / 7 days)
Day Surgery:	01793 604152 / 4148	(0800 - 2000 weekdays)
Daisy Ward:	01793 603040 / 3041	(24h / 7 days)
Meldon Ward:	01793 646276	(24h / 7 days)
Shalbourne Suite:	01793 646060	(24h / 7 days)
NHS Helpline:	111	(24h / 7 days)



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Please remember you were given the following pain relief while in hospital

Paracetamol at:

Codeine at:

Ibuprofen at:

Smoking will not be permitted on any NHS site in England. Smoking will not be permitted within any of our buildings or anywhere outside on our sites. Smoking facilities will not be provided. Please be considerate of others when vaping in hospital grounds.

This information sheet is available to order in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 01793 604031 or email gwh.pals@nhs.net

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