

Postoperative Instructions: Otoplasty

Pain Medication:

- Take paracetamol (Panamax, Panadol) every 6 hours regularly for the first 5 days.
- Take Ibuprofen (Nurofen or Brufen) with breakfast, lunch and dinner as required. Do not take Ibuprofen on an empty stomach. Do not take Ibuprofen if you have asthma, or known allergic reactions to non-steroidal anti-inflammatories such as Aspirin, Naproxen, Naprosyn or Feldene.
- You will be prescribed some stronger painkillers, take these as instructed, only if the pain is severe.
- If your pain is severe and not relieved, please call the office (or the hospital if afterhours). Sometimes the pain could be due to bleeding, or the bandage being too tight – these need to be attended to promptly.

Ice Packs, Swelling and Bruising:

- Do not lie down as the swelling and bruising will worsen. Elevate the head as much as possible. At night time or when sleeping, use extra pillows for 3-5 days.
- It is ok to sleep on your ears with the bandage on.
- Sometimes the swelling and bruising can track into your neck area underneath your earlobe, this will settle with time and is nothing to worry about unless accompanied by severe pain.
- It is unusual for the swelling or pain to worsen after 7 days. If this occurs, you may have an infection, please contact the rooms.
- The bruising (which you will notice after your bandages come off) will start to improve after 7-10 days, in some, up to 2 weeks.

Dressings & Hygiene:

- DO NOT REMOVE the bandage on your head. Keep it clean and dry, avoid activities that may cause excessive sweating inside your bandage.
- DO NOT try to wash your hair or shower your head/face.
- You can wipe your face with a wet towel or cleansing wipes for cleaning.
- Your head bandage will be removed at 5-7 days after surgery. You will be able to shower and wash your hair/head/face once the bandages have been removed.

Headband:

- You will need to purchase a wide soft head band (usually found in the hair section at the chemist). Wear this over your ears at all times for 6 weeks, then you will have to wear it at night only for 2 weeks more (total of 8 weeks). If you find that the head band is slipping off during the night, you can wear a beanie over your head band or replace the head band with a swimming cap.
- If areas on your ear are particularly painful due to the pressure from your headband, use a broader or looser band to redistribute the pressure.
- After your dressings are removed, you will be able to have a shower, and wash your hair as usual, using your soaps and shampoo. The headband can be removed when you have a shower.
- You can swim (if your wounds are healed) at 4 weeks, but you must have a swimming cap over your ears in the pool or at the beach.

Sleeping:

- Sleep with your head elevated on at least 2-3 pillows for 3 days after surgery. To ensure a good night sleep, take your pain medication prior to sleeping. It is not unusual to be particularly sleepy and tired after an operation or an anaesthetic. Take time to rest as needed.
- Once the bandages come off – you need to wear your headband to sleep every night for at least 8 weeks. If you have trouble keeping your headband on during the night, wear a beanie or the headband or a swimming cap when sleeping to keep your ears protected.

Diet:

Recovering from a general anaesthetic is like recovering from the flu. Start with clear liquids; then advance to soft, non-spicy foods over the next 2 days.

Activity:

- Keep your activities minimal for the first 24 hours. Avoid bending, heavy lifting, pushing, pulling or straining for at least 2 weeks. All these activities may cause bleeding, bruising and swelling in your ear. Any sweating within your bandage or in your headband within the first two weeks can cause an infection in your wound.
- You should be able to drive 24 hours after your anaesthetic.
- You can swim after 2 weeks, but you must wear a swimming cap with your ears tucked under for at least six weeks after the operation.
- You can do some light activities after two weeks, slowly build up to full exercising after 4 weeks. Intermittent swelling of your ears with activity and tiredness is not unusual in the first 3 months.
- No contact sports for 8 weeks is recommended. You will find it difficult to tolerate a helmet over your ears for 4-6 weeks as they will be very tender.

Follow-up:

- Your first follow-up appointment is usually 5-7 days after surgery with our practice nurse. This appointment is for trimming of stitches behind your ear, wound check and removal of your bandages. Make sure you call the office to establish date and time if you have not already received your first post-operative appointment.
- Remember to bring your head bands to the appointment so that our nurses can check they are appropriate and will show you how to position it over your ears.
- At your first appointment, you will be advised about massaging and touching your ears. Your ears will feel both numb and sensitive, sometimes very tingly. This is all normal and it is part of nerve recovery in your ears. It is particularly important that you touch and wash your ears properly after your bandages are removed, because it is very common to develop hypersensitivity of the ears (permanently painful and sensitive ears) if the nerves in the ears are not stimulated by gentle touch whilst it is healing.
- You will also have a follow-up appointment with your surgeon at 8 weeks after surgery. This is usually your final review. Further appointments may be made if required.

Please Ring the Office if:

- You have a temperature over 38 degrees Celsius. (A low-grade fever up to 37.5 degrees Celsius for 1-2 days is normal after surgery)
- Severe pain despite taking your pain killers.

What to Expect after Otoplasty:

- While your ears are swollen, there may be some asymmetry. The appearance may also look unnatural. DO NOT WORRY. This will improve as swelling subsides. Most bruising will take about 2 weeks to subside. Swelling of the ears will take 6 weeks to settle.
- To prevent postoperative bleeding, do not cough excessively after surgery. If you have to cough and sneeze, try to minimise the impact by allowing the air to escape via an open mouth.
- When the nerves recover, you may experience tingling, buzz, or electric shock sensation periodically around the ears. This is expected, and will disappear after a few months. The numbness at the back, rim and tip of ears can last for months. This will slowly recover over time. You can encourage return of normal sensations with regular touching and massaging of your ears which our nurses will discuss with you.
- The irregularities, pleats and puckers that are palpable behind your ears will settle. They smooth out with time, but can take several weeks.
- Your ears may appear quite severely pinned back (or 'stuck to your head'), but this will relax over time as the scars soften within the cartilage of your ear. It can take up to 6 months for the contours of ear to settle to their final position and 12 months before it starts to look 'natural'.
- If you were to develop any keloid scarring from your ear surgery, this often starts as an itchy raised scar or nodule around 9-12 months after surgery. If you notice any lumpiness in your scar and itchiness behind your ear, please contact the office for a review with your surgeon.

Your Medications:

- Antibiotics: Please start your antibiotics as soon as possible after your procedure. Follow the instruction on the box as dispensed by the pharmacist. Please complete the course.
- If you have any vomiting or diarrhoea associated with either the antibiotics or pain-killers, please cease them immediately.
- Blood Thinners: If you have stopped your blood thinners before surgery, you can restart it the day after your procedure. Please take your usual dose at your usual times, unless otherwise instructed.
- Diabetic Medication: If you have stopped or adjusted your diabetic medications prior to surgery because you were fasting, you can restart it as soon as you have started eating and drinking normally again. Please take your usual dose at your usual times. Please do not restart it if you are vomiting.

Your Postoperative Appointment:

Your follow-up appointment will be with our practice nurse in the dressing clinic

Date _____ Time _____ at

- Sunnybank Australis Specialist Centre Clinic
- Everton Park Clinic

Contact Telephone Numbers:

During Office Hours and Non-Urgent Matters – 3353 6165

After hours and for Emergencies – please contact the hospital where you had your surgery.