

Patient advice sheet

Undergoing major ear surgery

You have just undergone major ear surgery. This information provides advice and instructions which you should follow.

General advice

After any surgery (especially under general anaesthetic) it is not advisable to drive, make important decisions or operate machinery for 48 hours, because you may feel tired, sleepy and disorientated during this time.

What dressings and stitches do I have?

During the operation, dressings will be placed in the ear canal and a cotton wool ball (plug) placed on the outside of the dressing at the opening of the ear canal.

If you have a cut behind your ear, it will be sewn up with stitches under the skin that will dissolve and do not need to be removed. The cut will be covered with sticky paper strips, which you can peel off one week after your operation.

If you feel worried about removing the sticky paper strips yourself, the Aural Care Nurse will take them off in the first outpatient appointment 2-3 weeks after surgery.

What may I notice after the operation?

Following your ear surgery, you may experience the following symptoms:

- Noises in the ears (ringing, buzzing, humming, squelching noises,) which may be new, or louder if they were present before the operation.
- Mild dizziness (spinning sensation).
- Changes in your taste (usually a metallic taste).
- Hearing loss and muffled hearing (like being under water).
- Blood-stained discharge from the operated ear.
- Occasional sharp shooting pains that may need pain relief for a few days.

Most of these symptoms settle within a few days, occasionally they persist for weeks or longer.

Using ear drops

To aide recovery and prevent complications after some ear operations, you may be prescribed ear drops to apply twice daily to the dressing in the ear canal by:

- First remove the cotton wool plug (if present) from your ear.
- Lay on your side with the operated ear facing up, then apply 2-3 drops in the ear canal.
- Do not touch the dressing deep in the ear canal.
- Lay on your side for 2-3 minutes to allow the drops to soak through the dressing.
- Replace the cotton wool plug afterwards with a fresh one.

The drops are to be used twice a day until the dressings are removed.

When can I get my hair or ear wet?

- Do not get the skin wound wet for 7 days.
- Then you can remove the paper strips covering the wound, wash and dry the skin and wash your hair.
- Remember to keep the ear canal dry at all times.
- When you shower, bathe or wash your hair remove the cotton wool plug out of the opening of the ear canal and replace it with another cotton wool plug coated all over with some Vaseline.
- After washing, remove the Vaseline plug and throw it away.
- Replace it with a dry cotton wool plug.

What follow up will I need?

Generally, you will have an outpatient appointment 2-3 weeks after your operation, when the dressing in the ear canal is removed. This outpatient appointment may have been made before your operation.

Several outpatient appointments may be required to ensure the ear heals properly.

About 3 months after the operation you will have a hearing test.

Usually, you will receive a letter confirming your outpatient appointments.

Head movement

If part of the operation involved repair or replacement of your bones of hearing, then you should avoid any vigorous head movements for 4 weeks.

How long do I need to take off work?

2 weeks should be sufficient for most circumstances.

When can I fly?

Generally, 6 weeks should be sufficient.

When can I swim?

Most ear surgery heals fully within 3 months. However, people vary in their speed of healing. Please ask at your outpatient appointment when you can start swimming again.

What problems should I be aware of?

If you develop any of the following:

- weakness on one side of your face,
- fever,
- severe spinning,
- dizziness,
- increasing pain and/or ear discharge

Please contact the ENT Department at either Stoke Mandeville or Wycombe Hospitals.

Contact Details

For further advice please contact the ENT Department (Mon - Fri - 9am-4pm)

ENT departments **01296 838080**

- Option 2 for Stoke Mandeville,
- Option 3 for High Wycombe and
- Option 4 for Aural care

The Aural care nurses also have an additional number 01296 316414

Outside of these hours

Please contact your GP, their out of hours service or the on call ENT Dr at the John Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford via the John Radcliffe Hospital switchboard on **01865 741166**

Please remember that this leaflet is intended as general information only. We aim to make the information as up to date and accurate as possible, but please note that it is subject to change. Please therefore always check specific advice on any concerns you may have with your doctor.

How can I help reduce healthcare associated infections?

Infection prevention & control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection prevention & control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. Please follow our infection prevention and control guidelines when visiting our healthcare sites. Further information is available on our website.

Patient Advice Sheet

If you would like a copy of this information on audiotape, in large print or translated, please call the Patient Advice Liaison Service on 01296 831120 or email bht.pals@nhs.net