

Surgery for cholesteatoma / mastoid surgery

What happens before the operation?

You will attend a pre-operative assessment clinic where your child's health will be assessed by a nurse and you will sign a consent form. You will be given more information about the procedure and will have the opportunity to ask any questions you may have. Sometimes it will be necessary for the surgeon to examine your child's ear at this appointment. On the morning of the operation you will be visited by the anaesthetist and see the surgeon again.

What does the operation involve?

Once your child is asleep under general anaesthetic, the surgeon will examine your child's ear to locate the cholesteatoma precisely. They will make an incision (a cut) behind the ear to get a good view of the eardrum and the area behind it. The surgeon will remove the cholesteatoma and repair any hole in the eardrum using a piece of tissue from behind the ear or from the tragus (just inside the ear canal). They will usually explore the mastoid (the air cavity behind the middle ear) during the operation if infection is suspected. This will involve drilling away some of the bone for access to the intricate middle ear space. The operation usually takes 2-3 hours, your child will return with a head bandage which will be removed the next morning.

Are there any risks?

Every anaesthetic carries a risk but this is small. All important risks are discussed during consent. There is a risk of bleeding from the ear and possible infection; your child will be given a course of antibiotic/steroid eardrops for 7-10 days to help prevent this. There may be some discomfort for a few days following the operation; your child will be given pain relief to take when they go home.

What happens afterwards?

Most children go home on the day of the operation. The head bandage can be removed at home on the following morning. Any ear drops that have been prescribed by your surgeon can now be started. You will have been given advice about symptoms of infection and contact numbers to ring if you have concerns. Your child will need to come back to hospital one week later for the removal of a small dressing from the ear canal, which is removed easily at the clinic or on the ward. Your child should be able to return to school a week after surgery.

Hair should not be washed for one week following the operation. Your child should keep their ear completely dry until they have seen the surgeon at the follow up appointment usually six weeks after surgery, using Vaseline and cotton wool helps to prevent any water getting in the ear for hair washing. Other things to avoid until the six-week review are: rigorous exercise and contact sports, vigorous sneezing or nose blowing and air travel.

What happens next?

Your child will continue to be followed up at clinic and further surgery and scans are anticipated. Hearing checks are repeated as the ear heals, sometimes hearing aid amplification is offered or surgery to reconstruct the hearing apparatus is arranged later.

IF YOU HAVE ANY FURTHER QUERIES OR CONCERNS, PLEASE CONTACT

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